

## 76 – Escaping Betrayal

John 13: 21-31

It's one thing to be wounded by an enemy, but it's another to be betrayed by a friend. We expect enemies to hate us, and usually know why they do. There's been an offense or profound disagreement and we haven't been able to repair it. And it seems that no matter how nice we try to be to people we all end up with a certain number of enemies. It's just a sad fact of life. But betrayal happens very differently. It comes as a shock, a complete surprise, from someone we trusted and thought loved us. We discover that this friend to whom we opened up our heart, and became vulnerable, now hates us, and may have hated us for a long time. The damage that revelation does to our self-esteem is profound. We are injured at a much deeper level. It causes us to question ourselves. If someone who knows us so well has decided we aren't worth loving, we aren't worth protecting, then maybe our own assessment of ourselves is wrong; maybe they're right. Maybe we aren't worth loving; maybe we aren't worth protecting.

Enemies can bruise us, but only people we trust can betray us, and when they do, they injure us in a way that without God's help, may never be healed. These are the wounds that can leave lasting depression, that are the hardest to forgive, that isolate us from others, and that leave us afraid to ever trust again. So, the apostle John has given us a precious gift. He has described, in intimate detail, the horrible moment when Jesus confronted His betrayer. It's almost impossible to believe that anyone who knew Jesus so well could decide to betray Him. Why would you betray someone who is so completely good? Yet Judas did betray Him which proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that betrayal isn't caused by a flaw in the victim, but by a flaw in the heart of the betrayer. It exposes the character of the disloyal, not the worth of the forsaken.

None of us is as good as Jesus, but none of us deserves to be betrayed. Yet it seems that sooner or later all of us are, which is why we need to study this passage. It shows us betrayal, but more importantly it shows us how Jesus responded to it. John lets us watch Him escape its grip, and that's a lesson we all need to learn so that we can do the same.

### **Confronting Judas** (Jn 13:10, 11, 18, 19, 21-30)

• DBS (Sun, Mon, Weds-Sat)

### **After Judas left**

It's the very first words that Jesus spoke after Judas left the room that show us how to escape the wounds a betrayer leaves behind. Listen:

"Therefore when he (Judas) had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now, the Son of Man was glorified and God was glorified in Him.'" (Jn 13:31)

Immediately, He reminded His disciples and Himself of what the Scripture said about Him, of the destiny God had for Him. Yes, the Scriptures prophesied He would be betrayed, but they also said He would be glorified, and by His obedience He would wonderfully glorify His Father.

Jesus had disappointed Judas. He had not met his expectations. Judas thought He would use His miraculous powers to set up an earthly kingdom, and he expected to be given some position of authority in that kingdom. But Jesus had not taken that path. He was determined to die, and at some point Judas' attitude toward Him moved from admiration to resentment, maybe even disgust. That last glance from Judas after Satan entered him (v27) must have been filled with a breathtaking hatred, and the humanity of Jesus could not have been unaffected. It must have hurt terribly to have someone so close hate Him so much. Yet He did not allow Judas' verdict against Him to linger, even for a moment. No sooner had Judas left the room than Jesus announced the truth in the face of that lie.

### **Rejecting the lie**

Basically, Jesus said, "If the Scriptures say that God will glorify (bring honor to) Himself through this betrayal then what My betrayer says about Me is a lie and God will prove it. I choose to believe what God says about Me, not what he says" (paraphrase).

By the way that He responded Jesus shows us that we have a choice. Either we can believe the hateful things our betrayer says, and plunge into the misery of shame, or we can listen to God and believe what He says about us. There's really no other option. The emotional damage a betrayer leaves behind is so deep no amount of positive self-talk can heal it. We may try to ignore the judgments leveled against us but it's like trying to ignore a disease. Betrayal has the power to outlast our resolve. In time we grow weary of the struggle and give in. But when we turn our attention to what God has said about us, there's a power behind that truth that's far greater than positive self-talk. The One who made us, the One who knows us better than we know ourselves, approves of us and has great plans in store for us. He promises to uphold us, to vindicate us and to reveal His glory through us. Listen:

- Ps 41:5-12
- Is 54:17



# LIFE LESSONS

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### Three more dangers

As we've seen, the greatest danger that comes with betrayal is that we believe a lie about our own worth. We believe that we are who the betrayer says we are, not who God says we are. And we saw how Jesus dealt with that lie. No sooner had Judas left the room than He declared what the Bible said about Him. But there are, at least, three more dangers which betrayal brings with it. Here's a list:

1. The first danger is that we become bitter, and respond with hatred toward the one who hated us. In doing so we take on the same spirit as the person who betrayed us. Because they condemned us, we condemn them, and that judgmental attitude sours our relationships with everyone else and dries up our walk with God.
2. The second danger is that betrayal plants a doubt about our future. We feel ruined, destroyed, cast aside, as though that person had the power to take away from us the calling God placed on our life. If we believe that, it can become our reality. We can spend the rest of our days looking backward at what someone took from us rather than looking forward to what God has planned for us.
3. The third danger is that we don't recognize the spiritual source behind the betrayer. We forget that the devil has a role in that attack, and that his goal is more than to merely injure us. He's trying to prevent us from passing our faith on to others. His attack is ultimately against our spiritual descendants and our future generations. We may not see them, but the devil does and knows that he is attacking them by attacking us. In that sense, betrayal is not only about us, it's about those who depend on us to shake off the lies and despair, and to rise up and fight for them.

### Joseph's escape (Ge 50:15-21)

One of the best examples in the Bible of someone escaping from the grip of betrayal is Joseph. Though his brothers murderously betrayed him when he was young (Ge 37), years later he was able to explain to them why he would not seek revenge. He gave them three reasons which are as freeing today as they were then.

1. (v19) "Do not be afraid for am I in God's place?" Joseph refused to sit in God's judgment seat. He refused to condemn his brothers for their deeds. He was able to do that because he trusted that God would be the final Judge, and that He would apply to his brothers mercy and justice where it was due. So he didn't have to pursue his own justice. He was free to forgive his betrayers.
2. (v20) "As for you, you meant evil against me, [but] God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." Joseph saw that God had not allowed his brothers to stop the plan God had for his life. He had used their betrayal to serve His greater purposes. Joseph had watched God's power overrule human betrayal.
3. (v21) "'So therefore, do not be afraid, I will [nourish] you and your little ones.' So he comforted them and spoke to their hearts" (literal). Joseph looked past his brothers' jealousy and recognized Satan's plan to destroy his entire family. The spiritual attack wasn't primarily against him, it was against the twelve sons of Jacob, against the future nation of Israel, and ultimately against the Savior who would be born to that family. Nothing would have pleased the devil more than had Joseph killed his brothers. That would have been the end of the nation of Israel. But Joseph saw the devil's plot. So not only would he refuse to seek revenge, he would engage in his own form of spiritual warfare: he would feed and protect the very men who had once thrown him into a pit and intended to leave him there to starve. He would fight for the calling that God had placed on their family.

### Escaping our betrayal

If you take God out of the equation nothing we said today makes sense. If He's not there to overrule the betrayal, if He can't take what was done to us and use it for good, if He doesn't see us as someone in whom He will glorify Himself in spite of what our betrayer may think of us, then we are tragic victims who may have been damaged beyond repair. But if God's Word is true, and it is, then nothing a betrayer can say to us or do to us can change who we really are, or alter how God can use us. That's why it's so important for someone who's been betrayed to say this with Paul:

"...forgetting what [lies] behind and reaching forward to what [lies] ahead, I press on toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Php 3:13, 14)

### Conclusion

No sooner had Judas left the room than Jesus spoke the truth in the face of that hatred. No sooner had His betrayer left the room than He declared what the Bible said about Him was His reality. No sooner had doubt been planted than faith uprooted it. He had been struck but not defeated. He refused to be ashamed. He would be glorified by the Father and the Father would be glorified in Him. That's how you escape betrayal!

### Questions

1. Have you ever been betrayed? Without going into painful details, tell us how that betrayal affected you personally. How did it change the way you thought about yourself?
2. If you've been betrayed, have you been able to forgive the betrayer, or does that memory still trouble you? If it does, was there something in this lesson that helped you? Which point was most helpful?