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BETRAYAL MAY BE GOOD FOR YOU!

Today's Text: Jn 13: 21- 35

Extracts:

When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke. ...Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." ... So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him" [Jn 13: 21-22, 26-27, 31]

*In William Shakespeare's famous historical play, **Julius Caesar**, a powerful Roman political leader, Julius Caesar, was warned by a soothsayer to beware of the "Ides [15th] of March."¹ A group of conspirators, led by Cassius, had recruited Caesar's very close friend, Marcus Brutus, to stop him from becoming too powerful. On the night before the fateful day in March, Caesar's wife dreamt that her husband would meet with doom should he go to the Senate (the Capitol). As he considered his wife's warning, Brutus came in and flattered Caesar to go to the Senate in his company. There, the conspirators struck, with the fatal blow coming from Brutus. Dazed by his close friend's betrayal, Caesar cried out, "Et tu, Brute!" [And you too, Brutus!]. Caesar died more from the wound of his close friend's betrayal than from the stab of his spear. But none of the conspirators benefitted from their act. Instead, the name, Caesar, became the official title of the Roman Emperor through history. Therefore, betrayal may not be all bad. In fact, it may turn out to be the doorway to the victim's glory.*

How about you? You may have been betrayed by family, friends, colleagues or a cause. Does that mean that you have lost it all? Not necessarily because betrayal may be good for you! In this week's Bible text, we read about the betrayal of Jesus by one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot. On the surface, it looked bad. But it was the road to Christ's glory as the Saviour of the world. What is there in that story that could help you to process that betrayal that you have been feeling terrible about in recent times? Let us find out from this week's interesting study.

¹ *Julius Caesar the play by William Shakespeare, <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/shakespeare-play-julius-caesar.htm>*

1. Background: Judas Iscariot betrays Jesus

There is no doubt that betrayal is painful. Everybody has to trust somebody but it is not every “somebody” that is trustworthy. How will you feel when the person who knows your strengths and weaknesses is the first to reveal them to your enemies? How can you trust anyone else again when your best friend seduces your spouse? How can you explain to the world that the piece of property you had left in the care of a long standing and trusted family member when you travelled abroad for an extended stay has been disposed of without your consent or knowledge? How can you live with the reality that your close friend was running a Ponzi scheme² that he had lured you to put your life savings into and now everything is lost and you are a retired wretch? As the world gets more and more wicked and less God-fearing, the incidence of betrayal for material or other gains has grown. Some people are ready to kill, steal or destroy just to make money on family, friends and colleagues. Even some pastors are preying on innocent flock, especially women and girls, by betraying their trust so as to take advantage of them.

In this week’s Bible text, we find Jesus spending His last Passover with His disciples. The Last Supper had ended and He had just washed His disciples’ feet to teach them a lesson on leadership humility. Then, suddenly, He announced to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me” [Jn 13: 21]. That was a shocking thing to say or to hear. Let us follow how the matter played out:

a) *Betrayal is troubling!*

At the time that Jesus spoke to His disciples, we are told, “He was troubled in spirit” [v. 21]. Would you not be? The twelve apostles were His closest disciples and He personally chose them [Matt. 10: 1-4]. He had trained them over a three-year period on how to preach and teach. He had given them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases [Lk 9: 1]. They ate and lived together [Matt. 26: 23]. Even the man who was about to betray Him, Judas Iscariot, was their treasurer [Jn 12: 6]! Therefore, betrayal can be troubling. It strikes quite close to home.

Only those who know you quite closely can betray you. We are not talking of whistleblowers, that is, those who squeal on your secret corrupt or immoral practices. I like to call such people good betrayers because they are helping to unearth your bad nature. For example, when King Saul determined to kill David, Saul’s son, Jonathan, said to David, “My father Saul seeks to kill you. Therefore please be on your guard until morning, and stay in a secret place and hide” [1 Sam. 19: 2]. He betrayed his evil-minded father so as to save his friend’s life. But when people that you trust squeal on you when you are pursuing a noble cause, they are betrayers and what they do can distress and discourage you. So, after Jesus

² <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/ponzischeme.asp#axzz1ZkrjVLNQ>

had announced that one of His disciples was about to betray Him, they “looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke,” and Peter asked John to ask Jesus who it was that was going to do it. He told them “It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.” He dipped the bread and gave it to Judas Iscariot [**Jn 13: 22-26**]. At that stage, you can be sure that everyone in that room had a troubled spirit!

b) *Satan gets involved!*

As soon as Judas Iscariot swallowed the piece of bread that Jesus had given him, “Satan entered him” [v. 26]. That suggests a number of plausible interpretations.

One interpretation is that it was the devil that made Judas Iscariot betray Jesus. When, for example, David committed the sin of numbering the people of Israel without clearance from the Lord, we are told, “Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel” [**1 Chron. 21: 1**]. In telling Peter about his coming denial of Jesus, the Lord said to him, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren” [**Lk 22: 31-32**]. On that basis, we can postulate that it was Satan that made Judas Iscariot betray Jesus, just as he moved David to take a wrong census and Peter to deny Jesus thrice. However, the postulation breaks down when you realize that Judas Iscariot was already a greedy thief [**Jn 12: 4-6**] before Jesus gave him the piece of bread, just as David was already hell bent on counting the people even when his army commander, Joab, opposed him [**2 Sam. 24: 1-4**].

Perhaps a richer understanding comes from the battle lines that were drawn in the Garden of Eden, after man had fallen as a result of Satan’s seduction of Adam and Eve. When God cursed Satan, He said to him, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” [**Gen. 3: 15**]. Jesus was the Seed of Mary, a descendant of Adam and Eve. The time had come for that prophecy to be fulfilled- and Satan knew about it!

Remember that Satan knows that he has a short time and, having failed to stop Jesus, the Seed of the woman, he has gone to “make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” [**Rev. 12: 12, 17**]. Therefore, when people betray you, know for sure that Satan is behind it! He failed with Jesus but he believes that he can defeat you.

c) *But it was the doorway to Christ’s glory!*

Judas Iscariot had earlier in the week approached the chief priests and asked them what they were willing to pay him to deliver Jesus to them. They counted out to him thirty pieces of silver and “from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him” [Matt. 26: 14-16]. Also, the matter had been prophesied. For example, the prophet Zechariah referred to the thirty pieces of silver [Zech. 11: 12-13] and the Psalmist has said, “Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me” [Ps. 41: 9]. That was why Jesus told His disciples earlier that day, “Now, I tell you, before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He” [Jn 13: 19]. Turning to Judas Iscariot, after giving him the piece of bread, Jesus said, “What you do, do quickly” [v. 27].

From the foregoing, we can conclude that Judas Iscariot’s betrayal of Jesus was a good thing. The Son of Man came into this world to die for us. Until His time to die came, no one was able to lay hands on Him because He had the power to lay down His life and to take it back [Jn 10:18]. Since His accusers could not lay hands on Him, they were glad that one of His disciples had come forward to show them where to find Him. Their conspiracy coincided with Christ’s timing. *Clearly, the betrayal was the doorway to Christ’s glory for, in His own words, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him” [v. 31]. In like manner, betrayal is not your end. It could be the door way to God’s plan for your life.* Therefore, it may also be good for you!

2. Why betrayal may be good for you!

So, why is betrayal good for you? Here are some reasons, among others:

a) *It gives you a clue of God’s plan for you*

The arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus began soon after He had been betrayed. Within a matter of days, He had transformed from the famous Teacher to the Saviour of the world! In like manner, your betrayal is a pointer that God has good things for you and the time to begin the journey has come. For example, Joseph might never have become the governor of Egypt (and the saviour of his family from starvation) if his brothers had not betrayed him and sold him as a slave into Egypt. He might never have met Pharaoh in life if the Egyptian monarch’s butler and baker had not been imprisoned with him for a crime he did not commit.

So, when next somebody betrays you, remember that just as nobody loves to gossip about his/her inferiors, nobody would want to betray somebody who is a failure! The eagle never descends to catch a fly! Therefore, you are superior to those that betray you.

b) *It is a wake-up call for you to resist Satan’s plans to derail you*

Soon after His betrayal, Jesus knew that His Passion was about to begin and that Satan was going to do everything to make Him fail. In agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed to His Father to take away the cup (of His coming extremely painful death on the cross) if it was His will. The more He agonized, the more He prayed and “His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” In fact, an angel appeared to Him from heaven to strengthen Him [**Lk 22: 39-44**]. Therefore, *you must get ready to withstand your Gethsemane because Satan will do everything possible to make you fail.*

One way the devil does that is to make you concentrate more on the hurt you have suffered (or are suffering) from the betrayal. You will find yourself very bitter against God or your betrayer and swearing never to forgive. For example, as Job’s agony got worse, he cried out to God, saying, “What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself? Why then do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?” [**Job 7: 20-21**]. Of course, it was Satan, not God that was tormenting him!

Joseph triumphed because he did not take off his eyes from God. For example, after his brothers had sold him into slavery in Egypt, he was bought by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. The master saw that the Lord was with him and that everything he touched prospered. So, he put Joseph in charge of his household. Satan tried to derail him by putting lust into the head of Potiphar’s wife who made numerous unsuccessful attempts to make Joseph seduce her. In the height of the temptation, Joseph said to her, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” When her efforts failed, she falsely accused him of attempting to rape her. For that, Joseph was put into Pharaoh’s jail for an indefinite term. For resisting the devil, God made him find favour with the prison officers [**Gen. 39: 1-23**]. That is what God will do for you if you can resist Satan as you process the pains of your betrayal.

c) *Your betrayer(s) may never go free*

Jesus told His disciples that it was inevitable that He would be betrayed but woe to that person through whom it would come [**Lk 22: 22**]. When Judas Iscariot saw that Jesus had been condemned to death, he became remorseful and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They refused the money. So, he threw them in the temple and went and hanged himself [**Matt. 27: 3-5**]. Yes, Jesus was crucified and died but He rose again. On the other hand, Judas Iscariot His betrayer committed suicide and is in hell for the rest of his eternity!

You do not need to invoke Psalm 35 on your betrayers! *If the anointing of God is upon you, your betrayers have touched the apple of God's eyes [Zech. 2: 8]. He who has said, "Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm" [Ps. 105: 15] will vindicate you.*

3. Conclusion: So, forgive your betrayer!

Jesus has said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you" [Jn 15: 18]. At the Sermon on the Mount, He taught, "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven" [Matt. 5: 12]. That suggests that you must forgive your betrayers.

Take the case of Joseph. After his father, Israel (Jacob) had died, his brothers that had betrayed him became afraid, saying, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him." They sent messengers to help them beg for his forgiveness. Joseph sent for them and he wept as he saw them fall on their faces before him- just as the Lord had shown him in a dream when he was seventeen years old. He said to them, "Do not be afraid for am I in place of God? .. *You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive*" [Gen. 50: 15-20]. That should be your attitude to your betrayers.

Betrayal may indeed be good for you!