

Betrayal can come in many forms. Many if not most have been betrayed at some point, and some bear deep scars. Today's passage offers two examples: Jesus, whose person and example can encourage us in the right path, when we feel betrayed, and Judas, whose example warns us. The reader and Jesus knew that He was going to be betrayed and the betrayer would be Judas Iscariot (*cf. John 6:70-71*).

I. *Jesus was in absolute control though being betrayed.*

1. *Jesus knew the spiritual condition of all His disciples.* He was fully acquainted with all of the Twelve, knowing who was spiritually clean and who was not (Judas), who was blessed and who not. He had chosen all twelve, yet knowing that one would remain unclean and unblessed, a betrayer. Jesus knows us just as well and those who have betrayed. He will deal with all rightly, because nothing is hidden from Him.
2. *Jesus had chosen all twelve, including Judas.* He had chosen the twelve to be with him (Mark 3:14), becoming companions and "friends." A close companion became a betrayer so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. The experience of King David when he was betrayed (Psalm 41:9) foreshadowed the experience of Jesus the Messiah. Both were within God's sovereign will, by which also Jesus was made like His fellow human beings in every way, suffering yet without sin (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15-16). Difficult times can be part of God's plan for us, but we know that we can approach God and experience His mercy and find the grace we need.
3. *Jesus used the betrayal to strengthen the Eleven.* By informing the Eleven in advance of His betrayal, Jesus confirmed who He was and that He was in control. He also reminded them of how they represented Jesus in ministry (13:20). Judas had failed to accept Jesus and thus rejected God. Paul illustrates how people can accept the gospel message as from God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). When confronting betrayal, remember who Jesus is and that may represent Him.
4. *Jesus identified His betrayer.* When Jesus made it clear that one of the Twelve would betray Him (13:21), the disciples became dismayed, each asking if it were he (Matthew 26:22). Jesus knew who it was and identified the betrayer to John at the request of Peter. All things will eventually be brought to light, the betrayed and the betrayer, and all will be properly dealt with.
5. *Jesus offered grace one final time to His betrayer.* Judas apparently sat to the immediate left of Jesus, a place of honor. He received from Jesus the dipped bread, a further show of favor and friendship. Jesus appears to be offering Judas one last chance, would he be honored by Jesus, would he accept Jesus and thus be accepted by God. Similarly we need to be gracious to those who would betray us and to all who would do evil against us, never returning evil for evil. By doing this we are turning a betrayal into a positive force in our lives, allowing God to shape us by such events into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Though we may not forget a betrayal, we need not to be controlled by it and certainly not turn to evil because of them.
6. *Jesus sent Judas off on His (Jesus') timetable.* Jesus dismissed him and sent him off to do his betraying at the appointed time. Jesus was very deliberate in all that He did, knowing the right timing for every act. God has His timetable for everything, good and evil. His ultimate purposes are good, but He can allow evil, even sickness and death, suffering and betrayal, to accomplish His good purposes in their appropriate time.

II. *Judas made three bad choices that ended in his betrayal of Jesus.*

1. *Judas choose to deceive.* Judas pretended like the rest, as he would doubt if he were the betrayer (Matthew 26:22). And none suspected when he left the meal, even though John had been told. The deceiver deceives himself, but not God.
2. *Judas refused the grace offered.* Don't refuse God's grace, thinking there will be another chance. There is no guarantee that the Spirit will continue to work in a person. Now is the chance to accept God's grace. Embrace the goodness of God now, rather than holding on to our own failing expectations. Trust God! He knows what is best and is working that out for us.
3. *He gave in to Satan's leading.* Satan entered into Judas (v 27), but the responsibility accorded to him by the New Testament would rule out demon possession. Instead Judas became a willing pawn of Satan. We are in danger of becoming the same, if we do not respond to betrayal in the right way. An evil response to betrayal makes us as bad as the one who did us evil. Avoid bitterness, gossip and an unforgiving spirit.

How should I act when I have been betrayed? When a confidence has been broken? When a friend and close companion has failed to act as a friend should?

- Recognize that you may not forget the betrayal and you will be shaped by it, but we can choose to obey God and allow Him to shape us positively through it.
- Acknowledge to God that He is good and wise, even thanking Him for His good work in us, making us to be like Jesus, even if we do not yet see how that is happening.
- Ask that God work in us those character qualities that are Christ-like and pleasing to Him, e.g., forgiveness, humility, graciousness, a controlled tongue, etc. Resist Satan. Draw near to God. Look for the good.
- Seek help within the Body of Christ, God's present means of nourishing and helping us. Grow to be that help to others as well.
- Look to the future. We have a hope. Every tear will be wiped away, every fear gone. Our redemption will be complete.

By God's grace, we can turn betrayals into a positive force for good and we can look forward to the future when the pain will be wiped away and we will have pure peace in Jesus Christ.