



The Cancer of Betrayal

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This message is largely taken from personal experience - both as a recipient of betrayal and as a contributor of betrayal - and all as a guilty sinner who has been pardoned by a loving and forgiving Saviour.

Have you ever been pained by rejection in love? I'm talking about love, not mere infatuation. Your love was true, deep, as love always is. And you trusted that the one whom you loved was true and had returned your love; for that reason the betrayal was painful, otherwise it could not have been a deep wound. When there has been an experience of betrayal in love then the pain goes deep - the rejection is more painfully lasting than an amputation.

We are being told: "We all make mistakes. Marital fidelity and telling the truth under solemn oath are impossible. We cannot expect our lawmakers and our Chief Justice to be upright people." A millionaire pornographer holds marital fidelity to contempt. And it's scary to realize that according to popular polls, the majority of citizens agree. Fornication and adultery are rampant, divorce is almost the norm, for "all's well" so long as "the economy is good."

Children and teens grow up in an atmosphere of infidelity, believing that sexual purity and marital love are impossible. But they have human hearts that hunger for relief from the emotional torture that domestic infidelity brings. Many are sick of material luxuries in the midst of injustice. Thus drug use, alcohol, crime, and suicide follow. They don't know where else to turn.

Jesus pinpointed the problem in His Matthew 24 prophecy: Matthew 24: 11, 12 - "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love (agape) of many shall wax cold." "Love"? That's what fornication and adultery are supposed to be! But sexual lust and me-first selfishness are not agape. And why has the agape grown cold?

Because the Christian church, God's last refuge of righteousness on earth, has not proclaimed it. The Book of Revelation chronicles the disaster in chapter 18 verses 2-3: "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies."

The spiritual state of God's true people is described as unconscionable arrogance and lovelessness. In Revelation 3:16, Jesus complains that because of their "lukewarmness" He feels like throwing up, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." They boast of "needing nothing" while the world around them crumbles into moral ruin (vs. 17).

If betrayal, infidelity, or disloyalty has happened to you, you can begin to appreciate something about Christ. You have begun to be a "partaker of Christ's sufferings" (Peter says "rejoice," 1 Pet. 4:13). The Bible represents Jesus in the last days as a disappointed Lover. In fact, in a sense He always has been, but especially so when the time for "the marriage of the Lamb" has been delayed because the Bride postpones it. Ellen White once said of this, "The disappointment of Christ is beyond description." (The Review and Herald - December 15, 1904) On the other side of the equation is the one who has been the contributor of betrayal, infidelity and disloyalty. They have experienced deep separation in the abiding Love of Christ. When repentance and forgiveness have been keenly experienced and received through Christ's amazing Grace, they too can experience the "disappointment of Christ" in watching his children falter and fall.

A friend asks for special prayer that God would heal his broken heart, well, maybe not heal-for he doesn't want to stop loving the girl who has captured his heart and then has betrayed his affection.

How can someone's words comfort a broken heart? Someone may tell this friend, "Harden your heart so this can't hurt you! Drown your pain with this or that indulgence!" No, we need to pray that these individuals will not go that way! At times this most painful of pains actually turns into a special privilege of blessing: their suffering with tears can enable them to enter into fellowship with Christ. Jesus, although He is God - He is also human which is still a mystery. He is one with the human family; He loves the one to whom He wishes to be married; in His tender love for His Bride-to-be is concentrated all the tender love of faithful sincere people who suffer betrayal by a loved one, a spouse, a girl friend or boy friend who has proven disloyal and has violated the bonds of pure love.

It is possible even today when "the love of many shall wax cold" (Mt. 24:12) that a man can love a woman purely and in fidelity, unselfishly; then when she despises his pure love (and all this can be a vice versa case so easily!) and his heart is shattered, he can catch a glimpse of the pain that the Son of God has suffered for so long and sense a bond of sympathy with Him. It seems almost impossible that we can grasp the reality that even today Christ remains forever a human Being! He has feelings of heart, of disappointed love, like we have! Read Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, on and on. Yes, and Revelation 19:6-8.

The last thing you want is a hard bitter heart! The one you love may never want to be "forgiven" by you. In fact, they may even be in a deep dark pit which they feel there is no escape for the wretched sin they committed. Still the inspired word says in Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." From my viewpoint and experience, I can't promise you the kind of "happiness" that a heart like steel might "enjoy"; but I can promise you a joy that shines through tears, the joy of "fellowship of [Christ's] sufferings" (Phil. 3:10). If Christ has granted it to you, "do not despise" it. It is the "most weighty trust and highest honor" He can give. You will come into close kinship with Him, and that is something more than happiness; it is as the apostle Peter puts it "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8).

Sometimes we go for weeks in darkness and cloudiness of soul, our hearts burdened night and day as we wonder if our earnest prayers will ever be answered. But the dear blessed Book, the Bible, has encouragement for us. So many wonderful people whom we know that God loved dearly, have had to endure weariness and hunger and delay, and had as much reason as we have to wonder if God would ever hear their prayers.

Think of Job; it appeared that God had forsaken him. Think of Joseph sold as a slave by his brothers-but thank God he didn't give up his faith, but determined to be true to Him even when forsaken by his brothers and sold into slavery.

Then think of David, hunted like a wild animal by the King of Israel, the anointed king. David had to remember the Lord's leading in his past life and renew his faith continually.

And then there was Jeremiah, who said once, "everyone doth curse me" (ch. 15:10). He even wished he could die.

Then there was Daniel, a man "beloved of God," yet when he prayed, nothing happened. He tells the story in Daniel ch.10. He was begging the Lord to give him understanding-something that surely He is willing to do for us. But for three whole weeks, he got no answer. Daniel even fasted as he prayed, so earnestly! But the angel later explained the problem to him, "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to . . . chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard. . . But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days . . ." (vss. 12, 13). Be encouraged; things may look dark; but remember, "from the very first day" you began to pray in earnest, your prayers were heard. And the Lord is in the process of working out the answer for you. Just remember, He cannot force hearts. Your sun will shine again, by His grace.

Many of you may have heard this question raised before. It goes something like this:

"Why is Judas Iscariot so universally reviled and condemned when he was simply doing what the Bible says he had been ordained to do? For example, one year before the cross, Jesus had said, "Did not I choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:67). Wasn't Judas' betrayal predicted in Psalm 41:9 (John 13:18)? How could Judas help himself if long before he was even born it was prophesied that he should do this evil deed?" I suppose one would need to raise another question when hearing such things: On which side of the "great controversy" did these questioners really stand?

"The Gospel According to Judas Iscariot," is the current media rage. This Gospel of Judas is a Gnostic gospel whose speculative content consists of supposed conversations between the Apostle Judas Iscariot and Jesus Christ.

It is believed to have been written by Gnostic followers of Jesus, rather than by Judas himself. It goes something like this: Judas's actions were done in obedience to instructions given of Christ and that Jesus Himself planned the course of events which led to His death. The spirit of Judas Iscariot was "enmity against" Jesus, the open demonstration of what Paul says is by nature true of all of us when he says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). All during Judas' association with the Twelve, he was secretly trying to instigate rebellion against Jesus, although for a time he was not himself conscious of his true spirit. Apparently he joined with the Twelve in the missionary journeys and even succeeded in casting out devils (Matt. 10:5-8; Luke 10:17, 18.)

So if you ever hear someone talking about the Gospel of Judas in the affirmative - beware!!!!

God's foreknowledge is something He cannot help having, but it does not mean that He fore-ordains events. God foreknew what Lucifer in his rebellion in heaven would become, but God did not program Lucifer to become the devil, or Satan. Lucifer himself chose to become what he became. It was the same with Judas Iscariot; the erstwhile disciple had what all of us have-freedom of choice. Like all who will at last be lost, he was a new "Esau" who had been given the precious "birthright" of eternal salvation but chose to "despise" and "sell" it.

Judas allowed something very prevalent and very modern to finally possess his soul: the love of money. Treasurer of the infant church, he allowed himself to become a thief (John 12:6) until he lost control and sold his Lord for the price of a slave (Ex. 21:32).

The story of Judas reminds us how easily we can switch sides in "the great controversy between Christ and Satan." Oh Lord, save us from ourselves!

Unless Jesus loved Judas Iscariot as much as He loved the Eleven, Judas would have had an excuse for his sin, for no one can come to the Savior unless he is "drawn" (John 6:44). And Christ's love is not love unless He draws "all" (John 12:32, 33). Therefore, Judas could not be an exception. Jesus loved him too.

But how could Christ love the man who He knew from the beginning would betray Him John 6:70, 71, "Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? 71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve."

The book of Matthew chapter 5 tells us that the Father favors the just and the unjust alike (Matt. 5:45, 46), thus treating every person as though he had not sinned, and as though he will not be lost. This is because He has won for "all men" a "judicial . . . verdict of acquittal" by His sacrifice (Rom. 5:15-18, NEB, KJV). Another words - justification. For "every man" Jesus has died his second death (since the "foundation of the world," Heb. 2:9; Rev. 13:8). That blanket "verdict of acquittal" included Judas, who need not ever die the second death except that like Esau he chose to "sell" and "despise" the "birthright" that Christ had won for him and given him (cf. Gen. 25:33, 34; Heb. 12:16, 17). Jesus also gave the same birthright to us all (1 Tim. 4:10).

For Him to be fair, He must have given that same "verdict of acquittal" to Judas during the years of His fellowship with the Twelve; Jesus respected him courteously, genuinely, sincerely, for Judas had natural abilities. He was a soul for whom Christ was giving Himself. Jesus thought of him as "... mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

(John 13:18; Psalm 41:9; In Matthew 26:50 Jesus addressed him at the betrayal with special, wounded endearment. He called Judas "Friend."

In the story of Judas Iscariot we see Jesus contending with the raw "mystery of iniquity," defeated in His quest to save a dear one eternally who would not let himself be saved. Painful. His pain will be repeated in the final death of every unbelieving soul.

Did Jesus love Judas Iscariot, the man who eventually betrayed Him? Did He love him a little less than He loved the Eleven disciples? How could Jesus love Judas the same if He foreknew that he would double cross Him and sell Him for the price of a slave?

And if Jesus did actually love Judas less than He loved the Eleven, wouldn't Judas use that as an argument at last in the final judgment, "It's Your fault I am lost! You didn't do the same for me that You did for those people who are safe inside the City!" Many have a hard time with this question; they sympathize with Judas. They feel drawn as by an undertow to feel that God pre-programmed Judas to be lost - that God "predestinated" hell for him.

And they feel the same deep undertow sweeping them into the idea that they too have been predestinated to be lost. The result: despair. Can we find unmistakably clear truth in the Bible?

(1) "God our Savior . . . will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3-4). Clear as sunlight: (a) God wanted Judas to be saved. (b) He would have been saved if he had "come to a knowledge of the truth." The greek word for knowledge here is "epignosis" - it means more than just head knowledge - it is to "know upon," to have full discernment and acknowledgment.

(2) "The man Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all," including Judas Iscariot. When the Savior looked in Judas's eye and said, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48), the knowing glance was there-I am dying your second death (Hebrews 2:9 says it).

(3) When Jesus washed his feet in John 13:2-5, the betrayer's heart thrilled with a thought that he must kneel down and confess his crime and "be . . . reconciled to God." But he steeled his heart and committed the unpardonable sin of rejecting the final invitation of God's much more abounding grace seen in His love. He scorned agape.

No one, no one, is predestinated to do that!

John 13:1 declares that Jesus loved all of his disciples (including Judas) "unto the end." He loves you that far, too-up to your last breath.

Is it possible that the Lord Jesus Christ in His glorified state is discouraged with the slow progress of His church on earth? Their progress, that is, in getting ready for His second coming? He wants to come, He says in John 14:3, "that where I am, there ye may be also."

Their lack of spiritual progress delays that homecoming.

We may not say that He is "discouraged" (in actual fact, we are told that "discouragement" is a sin! - That I May Know Him Pg 279); but the word that we may use to describe how Christ feels is, "disappointed."

Divine "disappointment" cannot be described as a sin, but it is very painful for Him to endure while we go on generation after generation in a spiritual state that is immature. Ellen White stated that "The disappointment of Christ is beyond description." Ms 166, 1902. MR 18, p. 192). We should be growing up to be a bride for "the marriage of the Lamb" (cf. Rev. 19:7, 8), but generation after generation goes by with each repeating the spiritual skepticism of its predecessor. In fact, it's century after century!

Can you imagine the "beyond-description disappointment" that the Lord Jesus feels?

He loves His corporate people who are His church; yes, and He loves them individually. He loves you as an individual; yes you, the one-of-a-kind person you are; but He also loves His church corporately. The church has a corporate personality that in Scripture is defined as a wife. Revelation 19:7, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

A teacher is disappointed "beyond description" when his student makes no progress in learning. Such was a first violin teacher's feelings about his student; he was working, holding the bow correctly, but his heart wasn't in it; nothing in violin music attracted him. Until one day the student discovered an old broken Victor Red Seal record of Jascha Heifetz who is widely regarded as one of the most important and influential violinists of the twentieth century. His mother had left it before she died. Heifetz was playing a Schubert-Wilhelm melody on the G-string of a genuine Stradivarius violin built in the 17th century.

As the student listened to the melody, he thought, if that's what a violin should sound like, I love it! From then on his teacher saw progress.

This is a crude illustration; but when God's people learn to appreciate the kind of love (agape) that motivated Jesus to die the world's "second death," that is, when they see the "breadth and length and depth and height" of that love "which passes knowledge" (Eph. 3:18, 19) their progress will become phenomenal, -yes, even in one generation!

Have you ever wondered how the Eleven disciples felt when one of their number, Judas Iscariot, betrayed Jesus? They also felt betrayed.

They had never suspected that one of their number, the most talented of them all, the one who everybody felt would surely become the prime minister of the new "kingdom" Jesus was setting up, went over to the side of the scribes and Pharisees. And think how elated the scribes and Pharisees were that they had captured Judas Iscariot!

We have long known that into the seasons of all who remain faithful and true to the end there will come times of trial and keen disappointment, like Elijah running away from Queen Jezebel who threatened to kill him. The final issue that comes into the open just before the very last days will be that of the seal of God versus the mark of the beast.

Congregations that have always for all intents and purposes been loyal to "the seal of God" (cf. Rev. 7:1-4) will be tried severely when the popular mark of the beast is enforced; some, in fact we understand many, formerly loyal congregants, will become turncoats and will engage in persecuting their former brethren.

Those loyal to the "seal of God" will sense what it means to be "betrayed"! Jesus was betrayed, and those closest to Him will share His experience.

In mercy to His disciples, the Lord Jesus had permitted them to go through a preview experience in John 6 when He had preached about the bread of life. "Many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more," and Jesus sorrowfully turned to the Twelve and asked, "Do you also want to go away?" They responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? . . . We have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (vss. 66-69); but even then Jesus knew who Judas Iscariot was! (vss. 70, 71).

It's in similar mercy to our souls that Jesus permits us to go through the sad experiences of "betrayals," in preparation for the final issue when it comes (and it is very near). It will be like a great dam bursting when the water gushes down sweeping almost everything in its path; but none need be swept along if we have prepared. Our roots now can be sunk deep down into the truth and by the grace of Christ we can stand.

But we must study, we must know the truth for ourselves. Hours spent in pleasure and TV watching must become hours spent in pursuing the truth so we know it for ourselves first hand, not because some guru has told it to us. Matthew 5:6 tells us, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

God never tells anybody Bad News, only Good News, or if He can't tell you Good News, He keeps still. You may object, "Well, didn't He tell King Saul Bad News just before his death?" (1 Sam. 28). No, the one who told Saul the Bad News that discouraged the apostate king and drove him to suicide, was Satan, not God. "Well, didn't God tell Bad News to the people destroyed in the Flood in the time of Noah? Or to King Pharaoh of Egypt? Or to Achan, who was stoned? Or to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram?" (Gen. 6; Ex. 4-14; Joshua 7, etc.).

I think if you will read the stories carefully you will see that in each instance, God gave those people opportunity to repent; He never wanted to discourage anyone, or drive anyone to suicide. Did Jesus drive Judas Iscariot to suicide? No, not at all; when Judas betrayed Him, He called him "Friend" (Matt. 26:50), but never said another word to him.

When we come to the New Testament, again an angel says to the world, "I bring you good tidings of great joy" (Luke 2:10), and Paul says for all the apostles, "We declare unto you glad tidings" (Acts 13:32), and the last message God will send to the world will be "the everlasting Good News" (Rev. 14:6-12).

Since sin came into the world, God has been in the business night and day, with never a holiday, of being a Saviour. That is His relationship to you, as of this moment, even though you may have sinned grievously. He always has a message of hope for you, and as long as you have ears to hear it, He will declare it to you in some way, even if you are facing prison execution. Even if you must die, there is a whisper of Good News as you draw your last breath—please repent, He says; believe My love, appreciate My sacrifice for you, Accept my gift of justification, receive My gift of forgiveness, My eternal life that I share with you. You only "sleep in Jesus" until the "morning" of the resurrection. From where you stand at this moment, there is a path of hope, of Good News, for you. Respond to that Good News, believe it.