

Paraklēsis: Betrayal

Surely we have all felt betrayed at one point in life. A wise man told me once something like, “Technically, you cannot offend me. You can do things that I am offended by, but in the end, the offense is my choice. I can choose whether or not to be offended by your actions.” I believe that our God in His infinite mercy and forgiveness does not usually take offense at our actions. The things we do against Him are odious and oftentimes angering to Him, but in His love, He forgives. (thankfully) **Love is a barrier to offense.**

But my title here is “betrayal,” not “offense.” Is ‘being betrayed’ a choice we make just as I’ve proposed that ‘being offended’ is? In both situations, the resultant feelings are often similar – anger, confusion, hurt, vengefulness, frustration, sadness... But, I don’t think that feeling betrayed is very often a choice we make. Offensiveness is subjective, and I propose that betrayal is objective.

Betrayal results from a deliberate action, meaning that the action that caused the betrayal was something that was consciously decided on. Now, the result of betrayal may not have been considered when deciding to do the action – the betrayer may not have realized what the entire result of the action would be. I think this is generally the case, in fact. Most people are not evil and conniving to such extent that they **want to** betray someone.

Undoubtedly, you are thinking of or had thought of Judas Iscariot. This may be the most famous example of betrayal in the history of the world. From our “armchair quarterback” perspective, we are hard pressed to understand what he was thinking. Well, clearly, he wasn’t. Providence aside, the realization of the enormity of what he had done came as a surprise to him after the fact.

Surely, as children of God, we should not be a perpetrator of betrayal. Yet, sometimes our actions unintentionally result in betrayal. A little bit of forethought, consideration, and prayer before acting can save a lot of heartache and regret later.

The prudent see danger and hide, but the naïve keep going and pay the penalty. (Pro 27:12) Are you prudent enough to see the danger in what you are about to do and prevent a betrayal?

But the wise ones took oil in jars along with their lamps. (Mat 25:4) Are you wise enough to foresee the outcome of your actions and accommodate the situation?

My language here has mostly come from the perspective of **our walk** and the prospect of betraying a **fellow human**. This is important, of course, as we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, etc., etc... But there is a bigger danger to avoid. I mentioned the most famous example of betrayal, but I will argue that there is a more important and **more devastating example of betrayal** that we need to consider. This example is ongoing and may implicate us today...

*Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, "Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me. "An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, But Israel does not know, My people do not understand." Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him. (Isa 1:2-4)*

Yes, this is what Isaiah wrote referring to ancient Judah, but it is a warning to us today, for sure, not to follow that example. There are so many accounts of God expressing His disappointment, sadness, anger, frustration, and vengefulness over His people betraying Him. I am grateful that His lovingkindness is everlasting and His forgiveness is perfect and that His love for us is infinite.

But why have you chosen to walk with Him? Ask yourself that and meditate on it. I experience at times the lie that seems so true at the time: “Life would be easier if I didn’t follow Him. I would be freer if I didn’t have

to follow His commands." I am ashamed to admit this to you, but I occasionally have those thoughts. That is an example of me betraying our Creator. I don't need to fashion a calf out of gold and bow down to it. I don't need to celebrate Christmas and Easter. I don't need to work on the Sabbath. I don't need to weep for Tammuz, or worship the sun. All I need to do to betray my God is to believe in those lies, even to merely **question His promises**. That is betrayal – an act that can break God's heart.

Another easy way for me to betray God is to live a lie myself – and I do at times... (Have I mentioned that I am grateful that His lovingkindness is everlasting and His forgiveness is perfect and that His love for us is infinite?) When I act in order to **seek the praise of men rather than His** praise, I am betraying Him. In retrospect, it is a pretty stupid thing to do. God sees the heart and knows the truth, I know that. God is the judge, not man, I know that. But for some reason, sometimes I feel it is so important to adjust my actions so that my fellow man does not see my shortcomings... possibly all under the guise of not "causing a brother to stumble..." Romans 14 says that I should not DO anything that causes another to stumble. It does not say that I should "spin a story so that another doesn't know what I am doing..." A generic example would be to cover up a sin with my own story so that another won't know of it. But, not only am I **not** hiding it from God, He **tells us** to confess our sins to one another. "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." (Jas 5:16) So that **I may be healed**... But I choose to hide it from him for what? For **Pride** – another sin... yikes.

Here is Isaiah again, later in the same chapter:

*"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. "If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land..." (Isa 1:16-19)*

Do you have empathy toward God? Can you think on, remember, and feel what a harsh betrayal is like in your heart? Can you imagine your own creation that you love more than anything simply flipping you off, turning its nose up at you, turning its back on you and walking away? Maybe you have, in the past, conducted the thought experiment of imagining what it would be like to be beaten and ridiculed and spit on and stripped naked and insulted and then nailed to a cross... I have, and it is sobering. What about imagining the ultimate betrayal that God has gone through, watching His beloved turn on Him. If you do it fully and properly, with humility and compassion, you will begin to realize that what you have is not deserved and that God's love is so much more immense than we mortals can perceive.

That is an awesome thing to realize.

*Love must be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. (Rom 12:9)*

Glory to God & Peace to you.

-Nate

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