

BETRAYAL AND ITS OUTCOME

Introduction

Jesus calls us to have faith in him. That is most needful in situation that seem hopeless. The night he was betrayed was such a situation. All seemed hopeless for the disciples; Jesus was about to suffer the greatest possible shame and degradation. But he referred to what was happening as 'glory', and he showed great tenderness in dealing with them.

Jesus was betrayed to death

He knew it was his time to depart (13:1). He had given the disciples a lesson on loving one another as he had loved them. In the middle of that glorious display of divine love one of them was planning to betray him.

The contrast could hardly be greater. Betrayal is the lowest thing a person can do.

Judas was filled with greed and with malice for the God of love. Their spirit was exactly the opposite.

He had received blessing after blessing from Jesus. Now he would arrange his death.

It was made worse by the privileges Jesus had given him. He had been chosen to be an apostle; others had been passed by and he was chosen to bring the greatest message the world has ever known.

When Jesus spoke to him the others thought he was giving instructions to help the poor – though Jesus himself was poor. Jesus' kindness found no sympathy in Judas.

Jesus showed special friendship towards Judas when he gave him a piece of bread at that meal – it was a gesture of special favour. Hence the complaint, 'He who ate my bread has lifted up his heel against me' (Psalm 41:9).

To add to his wickedness it is said that 'Satan entered into him'. That can only happen when the person has already made himself available by choosing wicked ways. He had sold himself to do evil.

It was the victory of evil over good, the worst over the best. The Saviour of the world was being done away in the most evil manner.

On reflection, this is what humanity did to God in Eden. Every favour had been shown, yet he listened to Satan's lie and tried to throw his Maker out of his life. On a smaller scale, it is what happens daily as people turn away from God to their own ways.

Jesus' quotation of Psalm 41 is significant. It expressed exactly what was happening, but in a strange way that must also have given him hope. Verses 10 and 11 speak of God upholding him and giving him victory, while the Psalm ends with a jubilant shout of praise. That was one reason he could speak of this series of events as being 'glorified'.

The apostles were unaware of what was happening. Only John was able to identify the traitor after Jesus had spoken to him. The rest could not believe it. This reminds us of the parable of tares among the wheat. The greatest wickedness can lie hidden while Christians get bothered about small matters. But Christ knows, and Christ is the judge.

It was as well they did not know sooner; that suffering was not necessary – 'sufficient for the day is its own trouble' (Matthew 6:34).

Jesus spoke of it as 'glory'

We might think that betrayal and crucifixion was so shameful it would obscure everything else. The fact Jesus refers to 'glory' in that context shows how great the glory must be.

He was entering the shadow of Calvary. He would seem a failure for being betrayed. His mission would seem a failure. He would seem a failure. He was about to endure the most shameful form of death. The supreme irony was that 'he save others; he cannot save himself'.

For the disciples this would be the greatest obstacle to faith in Jesus; to hope, joy, and love for him or one another. His statement must have sounded shocking, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified'.

In the very act of offering himself to all of that shame Jesus was becoming the Saviour of the world. There is no higher honour.

He added, 'God is glorified in him'. God would become known as never before. His justice is believable; but no one could have believed in mercy from the Judge unless Christ had died thus. People would see God's wisdom in the wonderful blend of justice and mercy the cross displayed. They would see how God could humble himself in love for them, for, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself'. God was taking the worst of human sins and using it to bring about good – 'out of the eater came forth meat' (Judges 14:14).

'God will glorify him', Jesus added. The reference is to what the Father would do as a result of Christ's offering. It was a purchase, and the Father would draw people to him. The Father would give him 'power over all flesh so that he would give eternal life'. Christ now has the honour of being 'the Lamb upon the throne'.

What consolation to his bewildered apostles, once they understood it.

Jesus shows tenderness to his people

He addresses them in a familiar and endearing manner, 'little children'. It is not common to speak to people like that.

He showed that he understood their concerns. 'Where I go you cannot follow me now'. That is what was troubling them, so he addresses it. He does not give a cold statement of the facts – they could not have borne that – but tells them what is good for them. He is not unfeeling – they genuinely cannot follow. And he gives the assurance, 'You shall follow me afterwards'.

The reason, on reflection, is that they were not ready to bear the cross. Simon Peter thought he could, and Jesus had to tell him plainly just how unready he was.

A further assurance was given when Jesus said, 'You shall follow me afterwards'. Growth in grace will prepare believers for what lies ahead. There are experiences that would be too much for the young believer; but when Christ has trained them they will be able to take up their cross and follow him.

The believers' destination is glory, to be with Christ. It is his reward. He will share it with them, for he has purchased it for them by his blood.

This Good Shepherd who laid down his life for them will be with them every day of their lives, protect them from all ill, and give both grace and glory.