

Date : 19th October 2025
Theme : Servanthood in Mark's Gospel
Topic : Betrayal – The deadly Sting that undermines trust.
Key passage : Mark 14:27-31; Mark 14:43-72
Key verse : *Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered.'* Mark 14:27 nkjv

Introduction

Have you ever experienced being betrayed? When you were young in school and you told a friend a secret, and soon, it was known over the whole school. Or at work, a colleague used your idea to get a promotion that you deserved. In marriage, you made the vow of faithfulness to your spouse but one of you strayed into territory you did not belong.

It hurts deeply. It's destructive. Everyone who has to deal with betrayal of one kind or another develops distrust in people. We are never the same after such a hurtful experience. The sad part is to be betrayed by those who are close to us; those we have known for years. The sting of betrayal is hard to remove. A faithful man is hard to find *Proverbs 20:6*.

Paul wrote *...the Lord Jesus, on the night in which He was betrayed, took bread 1 Corinthians 11:23*. This means whenever we take the bread, remember His betrayal as part of His suffering. How did our Lord Jesus, as Servant of God, handle betrayal?

1. What is betrayal?

- a. How did Adam and Eve betray the Lord God their Creator?

By listening to the Serpent instead of God's instructions.

The Lord had told them ... *You will surely die* (if they disobeyed His warning).

The Serpent told them ... *You will not surely die*.

Who should they follow?

Why would this be hurtful to the Lord? What had God given to them?

God had given them everything to enjoy.

(Life itself, perfect partner for each other, a world full of beauty, paradise in a garden where God had intimate communion with man.)

Compare this to what Satan, the Serpent, would give: A deception that would result in death. God, their trusted friend but Satan? A stranger. Yet they made the choice to follow Satan.

Their choice was compounded by the fact that they had deliberately chosen an arch-enemy over God. Adam's betrayal of trust is the exact opposite of faithfulness.

Nothing hurts as deeply as when we collude with an enemy to destroy a friend.

- b. Faithfulness is keeping your word or promise; betrayal is breaking it.

- A marriage vow is a covenant; breaking it constitutes a betrayal.

- Betrayal is when a spouse prefers to be with someone of the opposite sex other than his own partner. This is a red flag for loss of loyalty and emotional connection. A marriage relationship is fragile and cannot survive without mutual trust. Both faithfulness and betrayal are choices to be determined from the start, an act of the will regardless of the circumstance.

- Betrayal is denigrating a spouse.
When someone insults your husband in public eg. calling him a loser, stupid or “donkey”, or any disparaging term, and you are on the side of the crowd to laugh at him, you have crossed the line into betrayal. Failure to defend him when there is an unfair criticism in public to damage his reputation, erodes trust in personal relationships.

c. Consequences of betrayal

A betrayal puts an end to the covenant made, the emotional trauma makes healing difficult. In Zechariah’s prophecy regarding the Lord Jesus’ betrayal for 30 pieces of silver, the prophet states *...and I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples... Zechariah 11:10.*

The Lord said *...but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed... Mark 14:21.*

2. How bad was the betrayal that Jesus faced?

A) What was the scenario?

a) The disciples were forewarned

The Lord had forewarned His disciples of the impending betrayal test which would lie ahead. (Yet, when the time came, all of them betrayed Jesus). The disciples (including Judas) had shared the covenant meal with Jesus *Mark 14:24.*

One of you who eats with Me will betray Me... Mark 14:18.

...all of you will be made to stumble (fall away) because of Me this night... Mark 14:27.

Despite knowing that they would desert Him, the Lord made the appointment to meet them at Galilee after His resurrection to show them that His words were true.

b) The disciples’ failure to watch to pray

Jesus knew what was coming. He knew the disciples would be under great pressure as they were already experiencing intense grief and disappointment. To resist the temptation of betrayal, they needed to be watchful and praying to God through this *Mark 14:38.*

Unfortunately, sheer sorrow and exhaustion sapped their energy, and they failed to pray through. Is failure to uphold a marriage or ministry partner in times of crisis a breach of betrayal? The place of prayer was Gethsemane (= oil press. To be pressed severely).

When pressure increases, temptation comes and offers an opportunity to be untrue to God and His people. Jesus says watch and pray to face the temptation and to say no.

c) The disciples’ missed opportunity to stand with Jesus

The intended loyalty of all the disciples before Jesus’ arrest was identical to Peter’s bold assertion *...If I have to die ...I will not deny You. And all the others said the same... Mark 14:31.*

None of them understood how powerful would be the tension, in a crisis, between the intention to be loyal and the temptation to be self-preserving, unkind and to disobey God. Temptation will always knock at our heart’s door during a time of heightened grief and loneliness, anxiety and pressure. The pressure to betray their leader came hot and heavy on the heels of the disciples. The result? None stood with Him. Mark records *...everyone deserted Him and fled... Mark 14:50.*

B) Who betrayed Jesus?

- a. He was betrayed by Judas — one of His 12.

Judas betrayed the Lord in the worse way. First of all, he initiated the betrayal of His Master by contacting the chief priests *Mark 14:10*. He even told them how to identify Him in the dark ...*whom I kiss, seize Him and lead Him away safely*. These were the words of a betrayer. He led a large multitude of armed men to arrest Jesus. He had used privileged information and the trust of His Lord to betray Jesus' whereabouts *Mark 14:44*.

- b. All His disciples, men closest to Him, His most loyal followers, forsook Him. *Mark 14:50*.

- c. God's appointed religious representatives betrayed Him.

The High Priest (highest synagogue priest) was the only one authorised to enter the Most Holy place, once a year, to offer the blood sacrifice. Yet, instead of honouring the very Person he was supposed to represent, he used his position to orchestrate court proceedings aimed at condemning Jesus to death.

- He was so sure of condemning Jesus to death that he secretly called members of the Sanhedrin, the judiciary and political body to assemble illegally.
 - He had his chief priests to engage many false accusers. In spite of the fact that the false accusers' evidence did not agree, he still required Jesus to answer when He had no case to answer to.
 - The High Priest tricked the Lord with the question ...*Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?* The Lord said ...*I am...* With this reply, the High Priest should have understood His identity, instead he took Jesus' answer to charge Him for blasphemy *Mark 14:64*. He forced Jesus into a confession of a crime He did not commit.
- The entire council — the Sanhedrin
Consisted of religious leaders, elders and scribes and chief priests (spiritual leaders). These leaders had a duty is to teach obedience to God's Word.
Yet they used a mock trial to justify Jesus' death *Mark 14:53, 57-59*.
The whole group abused, spat, blindfolded, punched and mocked Him.
The officers, in charge of administering justice, struck Him *Mark 14:65*.

- d. Peter's betrayal was particularly hurtful.

Like the rest of the disciples, Peter was overconfident about not succumbing to betrayal. Was it fear that jolted Peter when the servant girls pointed out that he was with Jesus?

- The first time he denied the Lord, the rooster crowed. It did not register to him as a warning. Another servant girl commented ...*This is one of them...*, he again denied. Peter further exposed his identity because of his Galilean accent. ...*Your speech shows it...* the pressure increased and Peter took to cursing and swearing.
 - Only when the rooster crowed the second time, did he realise that he had betrayed the Lord three times. It broke his heart. He wept. The consequences were serious. Unless restored, the covenant relationship was over.
 - Despite the disciples' falling away, the Lord's solution was His resurrection and grace. He said ...*But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee...* *Mark 14:28*. There is grace for restoration if we repent.

3. Is Recovery from betrayal possible?

- For **Judas**, although he regretted deeply that he had sold the Lord for the price of a slave, he never repented. Suicide finished him. The Lord called Judas the son of perdition (damnation) *John 17:12*. This meant he ended in hell.

How sad it was that he had the opportunity to be with the Lord for 3 years, had seen the miracles, heard the profound teachings, learnt all about heaven and hell and yet to end in hell. Recovery from betrayal is not a given.

- For **Peter**, it was also a difficult road to recover. Even though the Lord met him with the others on several occasions, he must have felt unworthy. He went back to fishing; in fact 7 of them did. How kind was the Lord's action to have taken Peter aside personally to give him a chance to renounce his betrayal. He asked him *...Do you love Me?* three times, one for each of his 3 denials of Jesus. Every time Peter affirmed His love, the Lord re-commissioned him and established his role as leader in the early church.

The Lord had said *...If anyone is ashamed of Me and My Words...the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory... Mark 8:38*.

Therefore we are warned...*Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall... 1 Corinthians 10:12*

- **Restoration** is a difficult process.

It is better to make the decision beforehand not to betray Jesus.

But is this sufficient?

1 Corinthians 10:13 assures us that when we choose to stand steadfastly in our faith, He will help us. This choice is an act of our will. No external pressure can dictate our choice.

Do not underestimate the power of Satan to stumble us. Only the Spirit of God can keep us.

Hebrews 12:3 tells us that the Lord Jesus persevered through hostility and mockery from people who rejected His message and authority. The hostility was also directed against His personhood and His identity. He endured such betrayal without anger nor revenge neither did He quit to fulfil God's purpose. Like Him, all who have experienced betrayal must not grow weary and faint, but be ready to forgive.

Application

- What personal weakness would stumble you when faced with the betrayal test?

- How could you prepare yourself not to fall into the sin of betrayal?

- If you had been betrayed by someone you trusted, what would release you from bitterness?
