

The  
**BLESSING**



of  
**BETRAYAL**

## DEDICATION

To all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ to sincerity, and who have been wounded in the house of your friends for His sake. May this message be used in the hands of the Holy Spirit to help transform your crown of betrayal into the blossom of blessing. May the loneliness of personal rejection fade into insignificance by the warmth of His fellowship. May the Bride of Christ be made to know the reality of her union with Jesus.

—H. L. Roush

## The Blessing of Betrayal

The snow fell silently like drifting feathers and soon covered the drab and soiled earth with white. It had been snowing all night and I looked from my study window with a warm quiet heart on the first snow of winter. It was the day after Thanksgiving and the snowfall gave me all the excuse I needed to slow down my busy schedule to take the needed time to enjoy the fellowship of my family. We had much to be thankful for that year, as always. The hand of the Lord had been so obviously upon our lives and ministry that we could only bow before Him with grateful hearts and in the quiet knowledge that He had been the doer of it all.

The precious calm of that morning was soon shattered by the insistent ringing of the phone. It was the first link in a heavy chain that was soon to bind me in despair and sorrow; for the voice on the other end of the line informed me that great trouble had just entered my life. Circumstances had been brought to pass that now endangered my whole ministry, as well as the potential ruin of my personal and family life,

It is amazing how quickly the whole world seems to change when our circumstances change. Truly, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, for the quiet white of the snow now seemed to me to be only hypocrisy that covered the hard, cruel facts which I knew lay beneath its deceptive cover. The lingering joy of Thanksgiving with my family quickly disappeared beneath the shadow of this present sorrow and I sank in my chair trembling and shocked. Serious accusations had been made against me by an unknown accuser, and God knew my heart that I was an innocent victim of distorted circumstances. I could only cry, "Oh, Father, who would do this?" My prayer was answered in a few short days and with it came the deepest pain of all; for, my betrayer was discovered to be a friend who professed to love me.

For two days I brooded in stunned silence and blackest despair. The trouble which I found myself facing was serious enough but was compounded beyond that which I felt that I was able to bear by the unbelievable fact that the one who had brought this grief into my life was one who broke bread with me around the table of the Lord and spoke often of their love for me.

The precious truths which I learned

through that experience are the subject of this book. Our "personal" experiences are not so personal as we might imagine – what is happening in our lives as members of the Body of Christ is happening for the comfort and help of others (2 Corinthians 1). It is "happening" because it is the mutual inheritance of the members of Christ's Body to share in the sufferings of the Head (Philippians 1:29; Colossians 1:24).

## THE CERTAINTY OF BETRAYAL

The withering experience of being betrayed by our friends and loved ones must of necessity come in every believer's life. I base this observation on much experience in the Christian life plus the clear and simple teaching of the word of God. It is an interesting discovery to learn that the word "betray" and its forms are only used in regard to Jesus' betrayal by Judas, except a single time in Luke 21:16. In this passage, which is prophetic, it is used to depict the end of the age of grace and is stated to be one of the identification marks, or signs of, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The verse simply reads:

"And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinfolks, and friends; and some of you shall

they cause to be put to death."

This is a terrible thing to look forward to, but it is the plain promise of the word of Christ. The age of grace is to end with a world-wide religious deception. It will be the time of the great counterfeit – perilous times in which the truth will be resisted by deceit and trickery (Study Paul's words in 2 Tim. 3:1-8).

I believe that every man, in whom Jesus dwells, will in these last terrible times have his own personal Judas; for in the age of the counterfeit the false brother will be prominent. Also, betrayal is the common experience of every man whom God has ever used for His glory.

Our verse in Luke 21:16 says that betrayal comes by the hand of "parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks and friends." Startling, but true, and for a good reason. First, our enemies cannot betray us. We do not let them close enough to our hearts. We are not intimate enough with our enemies. It is with our brethren and our friends that we share our hearts, Since our enemies cannot hurt us, it is our friends who wound us. So, the Psalmist said in Ps. 55:12-14:

"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have born it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me;

then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

So all Bible history echoes the fact of betrayal at the hand of our friends. Abel was betrayed by his only brother, Esau by his twin brother, Isaac by his son, Uriah by his trusted king and by his lovely wife, Jesus by His devoted disciple, Paul by "false brethren." We need not go on, for this solemn truth remains: it is often our friends that rise against us and so magnify our troubles in the Christian life. In general I have been treated with far more kindness by the unsaved than by professing brothers; and I have experienced often the crushing wound of betrayal at the hand of those who professed to love me. This paradox may disturb and distress us, but the wisdom and love of God in it all is seen in the sobering truth that He spared not His own Son in this regard, but sent Him to His death by the hand of His friend. May God instruct our hearts in this precious lesson!

## THE METHOD OF BETRAYAL

The method will always be the same.

First, our betrayers will choose the time carefully. In the case of Jesus, He was betrayed at the exact moment in His life when He needed human fellowship the most (Mark 14:37); at the hour of His greatest need; and when He stood at the threshold of His greatest work (Calvary). Take heart, dear reader, if betrayal has been your recent experience. There must be great things ahead for you, else Satan would not strike at this very time.

Our betrayers also know the place to strike us. John 18:2 shows that Judas knew the secret place of Jesus' retreat. They observe us and know our place of agony and prayer; and so having the advantage of intimacy, they smite us in an opportune place.

Their means of betrayal will always be the kiss. They encourage our love that they might strike us in an unguarded moment. The word of God says:

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9).

There is a precious word picture in this verse. The original meaning portrays a trusted family horse viciously kicking from behind an unsuspecting and trusting friend.

## VICTORY OVER THE BETRAYER

What became of Judas? History has written his tragic end, but lurking in the seeming vagueness of the brief accounts of his death is a drama that has remained untold too long.

In order to see it in its real perspective, we must look briefly at the relationship between Jesus and Judas. Jesus chose Judas and prayed for him (Luke 6:12-13), as He did for Jerusalem that rejected Him and for those who crucified Him. Jesus desired Judas to eat the last Passover with Him (Luke 23: 14-15), loved him and offered him the place of love and communion at the table in the Passover chamber (John 13:26). Jesus washed his feet (John 13:5) and, hence, expressed to him a love that was indeed unfeigned and worthy of the Son of God. Jesus gave Judas full recognition and never revealed him as His future betrayer, referring to Judas as His "friend." Careful meditation on the events leading to the betrayal will reveal that Jesus offered to Judas every token of love and was unwilling to disown him even at the moment of his crime.

Jesus taught in Matthew 5:44 that we love our enemies and He practiced all that He preached on the subject. Even though He knew full well in advance the evil which

Judas would work against Him, He demonstrated His sincere love in every conceivable manner.

In Mark 14:45 Judas agreed to betray Jesus with a kiss. There are two words in the original for "kiss." One means the kiss of friendship and one means to kiss fervently, or the kiss of real love. Now come to Gethsemane and see the final scene. Judas comes with the multitude armed with staves and swords to take Jesus prisoner. Judas greets the Lord and kisses him; but, according to the original, not with the kiss of friendship as he agreed, but with the kiss of genuine love! Only eternity will reveal what happened that moment in Judas' heart. Perhaps, in the flickering light of the torches, Judas sees in the face of Jesus the shocking truth that in spite of his betrayal, Jesus loved him yet, for He called Judas, "friend." Jesus is taken away and Judas cries that he has betrayed innocent blood; he had learned that Jesus' love for him was real. His heart must have experienced a crushing blow, and now he cannot rationalize his madness or justify his dastardly deed. He tries to undo what he has done by returning the money, but is rejected by his worldly friends in contempt, as not even they can keep company for long with a Judas. His momentary gain turns to dust in

his hands - the future is black without the fellowship of Jesus and his friends - he has lost forever his ministry given to him by Jesus (Acts 1:20); his habitation will now be desolate, and another man will take his crown, and Judas will go to his own place in a lonely death by his own hand.

Did Judas die at his own hand? It seems apparent to me that Judas died under the force of the irresistible love of Christ. Judas destroyed himself because he could no longer live with himself or others and all of this was worked by the unfeigned love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It seems to me that the words of Romans 12:20-21 are suddenly clear:

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Is not the Word fulfilled that states:

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal..." (2 Corinthians 10:4).

"Charity (love) never faileth..." (1 Corinthians 13:8).

Indeed we desperately need to settle in our hearts that the word of God is true. We only give reason to the hatred of our enemies and cause to the betrayal by our friends when we recompense evil for evil.

Love that is unfeigned and unmoved because of evil worked against it will ultimately drive its betrayer to the lonely slopes of Aceldama to die.

## THE NEED FOR BETRAYAL

There is another consideration in the fact of Judas' betrayal. He was chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ, although the Lord knew beforehand that Judas would betray Him (John 6:64). In my own personal experience of betrayal at the hand of a friend, the dear Lord showed me this precious truth. While in the fire of this trial, I went to bed one night brooding over this one who pretended to love me and used his profession to betray me into the hands of enemies. In the night I awoke in prayer to be answered with these thoughts: the Lord Jesus chose His own friends and knowing in advance the treachery of Judas, He chose him anyway! He said of them that He had chosen them twelve, and one of them was a devil. I was made to thank God for that devil, as he was necessary to the ministry of Jesus, and for my betrayer since he must be needed in my life as well.

What possible need could a believer have to be betrayed by friends or loved ones? What good purpose could the pain and sor-

row of a wounded heart serve? I asked these questions and found answers in the night that met the need of my heart.

We have need to learn the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit in our lives, Consider the fact that Jesus was never deceived in Judas.

"... for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him" (John 6: 64).

I am sure that in every experience of betrayal in the believer's life he can look back and remember the faithful warning of the Holy Spirit. In one case, I recall I could have known from the beginning if I had only listened to the witness of the Spirit within. Who can explain the nature of the warning of God in the soul against a false brother? It is not easily put into words but all saints know the uneasiness that reason cannot take away about some who profess to be our friends. We know and experience that real wall of restraint that seeks to prevent us from giving our hearts to those who would betray us in a time of need in our lives. We would not so often be heart-broken and disappointed by others if we would be more sensitive to the faithful One who indwells us. Do we not believe in "discernment" by the Spirit? Then why do we often

brush aside the strangeness of our hearts toward professing friends and proceed to conjure up "fellowship" over all the warnings of the Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit? When will we learn that, "The Lord knoweth them that are His"? Our business is to listen to Him in the deep recesses of our soul and depend upon Him to search the hearts of others by His Spirit. The betrayal experience brings into sharp focus the truth that public acceptance among believers, using the phraseology of the saints, doing religious works, preaching, or any other outward mark that is often accepted as "proof" of a man's salvation and trustworthiness, does not tell always the true story.

"... for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Let us give to every man the standing which he professes to have with God but never let us go beyond the testimony of the Spirit of God in our hearts in our relationship with others. We read of many who came to Jesus and professed faith in Him, based purely upon the miracles that He performed and not upon a real heart faith in Him as the Son of God. Drawn only by the impression of His outward works, they numbered themselves among His followers;

"But Jesus did not commit himself

unto them, because he knew all men,  
And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:24-25).

Our obligation is not to open our hearts to every man who seeks entrance into our inner man, but to let our hearts be affected toward others by the Holy Spirit Who will never fail to warn us of those who seek to deceive us. Let us learn that "fellowship" is the work of the Holy Spirit and not of man. Let us not seek to establish it without His help or to ignore it when He has so obviously created it between our hearts and others in the Body of Christ.

What is the need of betrayal? Perhaps it comes to light through Peter's words in his first epistle when he observes that the "heaviness through manifold temptations" of his readers "need be." Needed because, as he so beautifully explains, there is a future and present fruit of such heart-searching experiences. In the future, this trial of faith, like gold tried in the fire, will be brought out of the furnace of our lives as praise, honor, and glory for the Lord Jesus Christ at His appearing. If we could only lay hold of this tremendous potential in the midst of our trials, how differently our hearts would respond to the challenge of the hour! Yet, besides this, (grace upon

grace), the heavy trials of life are used to do a work so necessary to all of us; the work of increasing our love and joy in this present life. Read 1 Peter 1:6-8 and remember that out of every furnace of affliction, we have come out loving the Lord as never before and rejoicing in the reality of His fellowship.

We need the betrayal experience to learn true submission to the Lord. The greatest prayer which the child of God can utter is the prayer of the perfect Son: "... even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Luke 10:21).

When we can thus cry from our wounded hearts, the sting is gone and we have triumphed; for our submission to the pleasure of the Father in our lives brings victory over every attack against us (see 2 Corinthians 2:14).

Read 2 Corinthians 4:15-18, which gives more reasons for the seeming unreasonableness of life's great disappointments. Paul gives the proper perspective to our heartaches by telling us that the attack is not against the outer man, but against the inner man. We so often tremble under the fear of what this will "do to me," and forget in times of trouble that nothing can harm us in the inner man, if we have taken to ourselves the full armor of God. These

things are only for a moment compared to eternity and will one day work an eternal weight of glory. These deep waters will only serve to lift our eyes from earthly ties and "things" and put them upon the values of eternity. The enemy would overwhelm us and darken our reason by causing us to concentrate on the fearful details of the outer experience; thus, while we occupy ourselves with meaningless worry about the outer man, we are often smitten in the inner man to our own defeat. Many a saint has survived the outward experience only to fall mortally wounded by bitterness, resentment, malice, and an unforgiving heart. In times of betrayal let the saint first learn to gird up the loins of his mind in Christ and to appropriate the full armor of God, which is actually putting on Christ in all of His strength and might.

## THE BLESSING OF BETRAYAL

Consider the blessing that betrayal brings when, through it, we learn to recognize no hand but the faithful hand of our loving Father in heaven. We give far too much glory to the devil, the world and the flesh in the circumstances of our lives. We blame our enemies when we are buffeted; but great peace and quietness of heart be-

comes ours when we refuse to recognize second causes in our lives. God is sovereign and He is our Father. He has been pleased to allow this to happen to us and our part is to believe that —

"... all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

In the blessing of this quietness, David endured with a patient spirit the cursing of Shimei and forbade any evil to be returned to him for the evil rendered. David saw but one hand behind it all - the loving hand of God working good through Shimei's evil.

Joseph was bitterly betrayed by his brothers, placed in the pit and sold as a slave only to be befriended by Potiphar's wife and then cruelly betrayed again. Placed in prison, he made friends with the butler and soon knew the agony of the kiss of betrayal once more; for when the butler was restored to the favor of the court of Egypt, he broke his prison promise to Joseph and -

"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (Genesis 40:23).

So much trouble for one man seems sufficient to mortally wound him in the inner man until he would perish under the bitter-

ness of soul that often comes from personal rejection; but the years passed and Joseph was remembered of the Lord and exalted to the throne of Egypt in victory and the blessed secret of his sanity, yea, of his triumphant, conquering patience is revealed in his words to his brothers:

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good..." (Genesis 50:20).

Peter manifested this same truth in his perspective of Calvary's cross. Although he accuses the nation of taking Jesus by wicked hands to crucify and slay Him, Peter viewed it as no tragedy, saw in it no victory of Satan; but, triumphantly announces that the Lord Jesus Christ was—

"... delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God..." (Acts 2:23).

And so, my dearly beloved saints of God, who at this moment find yourselves in perplexity over the betrayal of a friend, admit this moment that God could have overruled it if He had wished, but allowed it for your good. Rejoice in this blessing, as He is owning you as His son and preparing you for the comfort and the blessing of others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). He has graced your life with the glorious privilege of sharing with you the most intimate of the sufferings of

Christ (Philippians 3:10). This fellowship is with a select company, for not all are privileged to know the agony of betrayal that we might share in some degree the depth of the love of Christ. Your betrayer has meant it for evil, But God will make it all for good; and as Jesus chose Judas, since He had need of the betrayal in His own life, so God in His faithfulness has chosen our betrayers - He knew full well that if the choice had been ours, it would never have been made.

You ask - "Chosen our betrayers? What good can they do for us?" You have forgotten that Judas' betrayal delivered Jesus Christ to His greatest work and put in motion the events that fulfilled the eternal purposes of God in Christ. Eternal redemption through the blood of Christ was the fruit of Judas' despicable deed! It remains a fact that our friends will not do this work for us. Only our enemies will deliver us to the pain of circumstances beyond our control; and hence, perform a real service to the saints of God.

A betrayer delivered me to circumstances that changed the course of my ministry and released me to the greatest work of my life. A betrayer worked hardship in my life that resulted in my being freed from dependence upon man and made me the Lord's free

man! A betrayer brought suffering into my life that resulted in the present fruitful and joyful ministry that I have received of Christ for His Body. Like all saints, my hindsight being better than my foresight, I look back and thank God for every "devil" chosen by a faithful Father, as I might well have missed some of life's greatest blessings had it not been for them.

The blessing of betrayal? Only God could make it thus, but I have found the paradox of these words to be a reality. Betrayal, at the hands of those whom we have trusted with our hearts, can yield blessing that we are not able to contain. Through betrayal I have learned what the Psalmist meant when he sang –

"By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me" (Psalm 41:11).

Also, what the Prophet meant when he wrote –

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 54:17).

Through betrayal I have learned that the strength and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ

in my life can only be worked in the blessing of weakness brought to pass by the buffeting of Satan's messenger as a thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Through betrayal we are prepared for the blessing of being used to comfort others in the same trial of faith with the same comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God (2 Corinthians 1:4). Through betrayal at the hand of a "friend", I have received the blessing of putting in this message the precious truths which I have learned in the fellowship of Christ Jesus my Lord. The blessings of thousands who will read this message flow from the fountain of betrayal and, hence, the evil of that deed is transformed, by grace, into the goodness of God.

Through the experience of betrayal by false friends, I have received one of life's greatest blessings in learning how to love my enemies and to bless those who persecute me.

These words –

"Bless them which persecute you:  
bless, and curse not" (Romans 12:14)

for years were hard for me to understand and much more difficult to practice. The performance of these words are diametrically opposed to all that is in man; and the understanding of them lay couched be-

neath the bitter waters of savage attack by my "friends." Experience alone has made them a blessed reality. The word "bless" means to "eulogize," or "to speak well of." The words "curse not" mean to "wish no ill." When the blessing of betrayal is realized, when we look back and see how much we have reaped in increased joy, love, grace, strength and fellowship with the dear Lord Jesus, we are overwhelmed with the realization of how much good our betrayer has worked for us. His intentions are of no concern. It is the blessed fruit which he has brought into our lives that matters. How gloriously easy it becomes to truthfully "speak well" of him and wish him no ill. Yes, when we look upon our present blessed state and realize that we were delivered by an enemy to the liberty and largeness of the land that we now possess, we can say: "I can say nothing but good of him, for he has been a blessing to me!" Thus, like the trampled flower whose perfume rises to bless the foot that crushed it, so our hearts can find no bitterness, seek no revenge, wish no ill. The fullness of our own cups must overflow and bless the hand that afflicted us.

— H. L. Roush