

When Friends Betray

Today's Treasure

*How long will all of you attack a man to batter him, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. They take pleasure in falsehood. They
bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse. Selah*
Psalm 62:3-4

Many years ago, before cell phones, I couldn't find my keys so I was stuck home by myself instead of attending Bible study. From my perspective, this was bad news because I was an emotional wreck and needed the encouragement I get from being with my friends. Losing my keys was the straw that broke the camel's back that day. I collapsed in a heap on our sofa, tears streaming down my face, fear pouring out of my broken heart. No one in the house, I gave in to every emotion I had tried to keep under control, wailing, *God, God, why do these people hate us so much? Why do they want to destroy Chuck?*

Additional information about the gossip and church conflict seemed more than I could bear and soon I was hyperventilating.

Several years of church conflict were coming to a climax. Chuck was pursuing another pastoral position and a small group of people we had previously counted as friends were trying to destroy his reputation with the Search Committee interviewing Chuck. Years later I learned that what I had *heard* about their effort was minor compared to what they were really doing.

David's words in Psalm 62 came alive:

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Of course, David's enemies wanted to do more than destroy his reputation, they wanted to murder him. Isn't that the motive behind gossip and lying, especially when it comes from people who claim to be your friends? When we inflict hateful and mean words that destroy another person's reputation, it is as if we have murdered them. We kill a part of their hearts because the very people they trusted betrayed them. David realized

that one of his supports that he depended on for safety, his trusted friends, was rotten. He could trust no one, except for The One. David's heartbreak over such broken relationships resonated with me.

So what appeared to be bad news? My lost keys turned out to be a gift. That day on the sofa, alone in our house, hyperventilating and wailing out my terror and disappointment, God met me in a way I will never forget. Once more through King David's own life, He led me to Psalm 3:

LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him." But You, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the LORD, and He answers me from His holy mountain, lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.

I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side. Arise, LORD! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked.

From the LORD comes deliverance. May Your blessing be on Your people.

Psalm 3 ESV

Like a powerful, soothing medication, this passage slowed my breathing, calmed my heart, and turned my focus to the only One worthy of my trust. I heard Him say, "Chuck belongs to me. I will protect him. I will fight for you. You have only to be still."

As my heart rate slowed down, a transformation took place. God's marching orders had not changed. Despite the circumstances, as I waited on Him, His love compelled me to trust Him and to reflect His love to others by my response to those circumstances.

In those precious moments, I also sensed Him promising, "Everything you think you are losing, I will give back to you and more. Trust me."

LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

David heard the same message, though not from someone else's writing. He heard it from the very heart of God. As David waited alone in submission before God, he was comforted with assurances of His love, protection and deliverance. David's trust was rooted in his personal relationship to God. Do you hunger for this same comfort and deliverance? You will not fully experience this kind of comfort and peace unless you have a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus. Do you remember how many times David uses personal pronouns to describe his relationship to God? Nine

times! David knew, really knew, God personally. That personal relationship opened the gateway for David to directly cry out to God with expectations that He would answer.

Though I would never willingly go back to that terrible time when I thought gossip would destroy Chuck's ability to pastor a church, I do treasure the intimacy with Jesus that grew in that tumultuous period. With every slam of another betrayal, the Lord pulled me closer and gave me "riches stored in secret places", treasures in His Word I never would have seen when the lights were shining. Those treasures in the darkness later helped light my pathway through battling cancer and then in the terrifying Land of Grief.

The Lord, our Rescuer, even used the gossip to help create a safe place for us to serve in ministry for the next thirty years. The Search Committee refused to hear the mean and hateful reports and called Chuck as their pastor. Our first week in this new church, I cried as I realized that the leadership knew our warts but wanted us any way. For the first time in a long time, I felt safe. Over the next thirty plus years of ministry that grew and opened doors of opportunity to serve the Lord, I often thought about those moments with Him and His promise. He poured out and continues to pour out His blessings in ways too many to name.

If you are in that broken place, ask the Lord to use this dark time to help you see Him and to fall more in love with Jesus. Remember, if God has kept the mother of all promises, the promise to send our Redeemer, surely you can trust Him to continue to keep all of His promises. If you don't know where to turn in Scripture, start with the book of John. Travel along the dusty roads of Galilee with Jesus and watch Him interact with people just like you. He promises that if we seek Him, we will find Him. Right now, ask Jesus to deliver you from your sins, to come into your heart, and to open your eyes to His presence.

If you feel pulled toward knowing Jesus as Savior but need more help in experiencing His forgiveness, please reach out to me. What a privilege for me to help introduce you to your Savior!

STORE UP MORE TREASURES

At some point in our lives, we or someone we know will go through great suffering. I encourage you to go the MARKINC website and listen to the interview "[Ovarian Cancer Fighter: The Constant Battle](#)" so that you can store up treasures of encouragement for the next rainy day in your life or someone else's. Here is a summary and teaser of this resource:

In 2009, Debbie Kahler was diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer, a disease that strikes fear in the hearts of anyone familiar with its deadly prognosis. Most people would respond with despair to such tragic losses, tempted to give in to the fear of losing their own battles. Yet that is not the message of Debbie's journey.

