

# When Friends Fail You ... Then What?

## Surviving the Loss of Cherished Friends

We have probably all suffered the trial of losing friends that we loved dearly, and never for a moment thought would ever turn against us, or drop out of our lives for some known or unknown reason. The pain of this loss — of being rejected — is much more painful than being cast aside by others who may not have been close to us, or who have used us to their own advantage in social or business environments. Those rejections we can bear, but it is the people whom we have loved, and who suddenly and perhaps inexplicably disown us, that can lead to great grief in our lives.

The Scriptures have a great deal to say about such loss of friendship, and the pain it thrusts upon us, and they also give us the answers as to how we are to respond to this loss. This issue is especially appropriate in these end-time days, because Lke 21:16 says that, at that time, we will be betrayed by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, and friends, and some will be put to death through these betrayals.

The solutions to dealing with every problem in our lives are liberally doled out to all who will look and see what the Creator tells us, the One who desires that we live the “abundant life” (John 10:10), one free from the human sorrow that besets the vast majority in this world who do not serve God, and do not keep His commandments.

### Those Who Betrayed David

King David was a man “after God’s own heart”, who loved His laws and meditated upon them day and night. One would think that he would be protected from undue distress because of the defection of long-admired friends in who he committed a great deal of trust. After all, a king needs to trust to a certain degree those around him or he could not carry out his functions as leader of

the nation. Yet, note what David says in Psalm 55.

*“Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not Yourself from my supplication. <sup>2</sup>Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint and make a noise, <sup>3</sup>because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. <sup>4</sup>My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. <sup>5</sup>Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. <sup>6</sup>And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest. <sup>7</sup>Lo, then would I wander far off and remain in the wilderness. Selah. <sup>8</sup>I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. <sup>9</sup>Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues, for I have seen violence and strife in the city. <sup>10</sup>Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. <sup>11</sup>Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. <sup>12</sup>For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hidden myself from him: <sup>13</sup>but it was you, a man my equal, my guide and my acquaintance. <sup>14</sup>We took sweet counsel together and walked unto the house of God in company. <sup>15</sup>Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quickly into hell [the grave]: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them. <sup>16</sup>As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. <sup>17</sup>Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice. <sup>18</sup>He has delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was*

against me, for there were many with me. <sup>19</sup>God shall hear and afflict them, even He that abides of old. Selah. Because they have no charges, therefore they fear not God. <sup>20</sup>He has put his hands against such as be at peace with him: he has broken His covenant. <sup>21</sup>The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords. <sup>22</sup>Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. <sup>23</sup>But You, O God, shall bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, but I will trust in You.”

Note the great distress that David was experiencing throughout this Psalm, his heart was “sore pained”, and the “terrors of death” were upon him. “Fearfulness and trembling” had burdened him, and horror overwhelmed him. He wanted to escape the trial like a dove that would fly away into the wilderness and be at rest ... or quickly escape from the windy storm and tempest.

We quickly learn from this Psalm that the opposition did not come from some wicked enemy who was lurking in the shadows to quickly sieze him, but the trouble came from a trusted friend, “... a man my equal, my guide and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company” (verses 13 and 14). David said he could have borne an enemy coming against him, or someone who hated him (verse 12), but here was a close, trusted compatriot whom he never expected to oppose him. Verses 20 and 21 indicate that David and this man had been at peace, but the former friend had broken a **covenant** [Strong 1285, **beriyth**, “covenant, treaty, alliance, agreement”] they had together, and used smooth and soft words to deceive David as to the friend’s true intentions.

[Incidentally, this sounds a lot like the animosity between Jesus Christ and Lucifer, for both are Sons of God (Job 1 and 2, and Luke 1:32) and Lucifer was initially perfect, but

later sinned (Ezekiel 28:15) whereas Jesus never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). They were initially friends in righteousness, equals as Sons, until Lucifer turned away from perfection in holiness and became Satan, the fallen one. This separation must have been a terrible blow to Christ.]

All through the Psalms David laments the his enemies who constantly oppose him. Note Psalm 56, for example, where in verses 1 and 2 he states,

*“Be merciful unto me, O God, for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresses me. My enemies would daily swallow me up, for they are many who fight against me, O You most high.”*

In verses 3 and 4 of Psalm 57 David writes,

*“He shall send from heaven and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth. My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.”*

Satan is indeed likened to a lion prowling across the earth, seeking whom he might devour (I Peter 5:8), so David’s words are well chosen, typifying the nature of his enemies. However, David said he could put up with these characters, since they revealed who they were ... but those who were his former friends and secretly plotted mischief against him were the ones he was by far the most grieved with; they caught him blindsided, and showed no remorse for their defection.

## A Proper Response to Such Loss

The response of David to the defection of his friend was immediate and strong: He pleaded with God that “death sieze upon them”, and they “go down quickly into the grave”. While violently

chastizing this former friend and asking that he die, yet he himself did not take action to immediately do away with this double-crossing former associate ... which he certainly could have done as king of all the land. Rather, the spirit of God within him taught him to bear the suffering of the loss, and place into God's hands the appropriate judgment and sentence for the terrible behavior of this miscreant, for even though David had the qualities of God in his character — as do all of the saints — yet he did not have full knowledge of the nature of this man's decision to rebel against him, and become the enemy. Note that David stated in verse 19, *"God shall hear [his prayer] and afflict them ..."*, those that do not fear God.

The response of David to the sudden turn-about of a long-time friend is the same response we Christians must make. It is the same action that Jesus Christ took when divorced from close friends, as painful as the whole process was to Him as a flesh and blood human being. Let us look at the Biblical instructions concerning this painful issue of losing the companionship of a close friend.

**1. Jesus Christ's examples.** As if it was not enough to face the Sanhedrin, abusive Roman leaders, and other Satan-inspired opponents as His crucifixion drew near, the fleeing of His own disciples when the chips were down must have added grief upon grief when He was taken by the priest's officers and brought before Caiaphas the high priest. He was left alone: *"Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled"* (Matthew 26:56). Even Peter, who proclaimed he would never deny Him (Matthew 26:33-35), was prophesied to indeed deny Him three times that same day ... and we all know that he did just that (Matthew 26:69-75). Christ's response was simple and kind:

*"And Peter said, Man, I know not what you say. And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crowed. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him,*

*Before the cock crows, you shall deny Me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly"*. Luke 22:60-62.

Note the response of Peter: he *"... went out and wept bitterly"*. He repented of what he had done to the Master Teacher with whom He had been closely associated for three years. Is this not the desired effect of God's admonition for all of us in the face of being treated brutishly by those close to us? See the next point.

**2. Jesus Christ's teachings.** He emphasized in Matthew 5:10-12 that we must be willing to accept the malignment of others thrown at us, whether from former friends or from enemies.

*"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."*

Note the instructions in Matthew 5:43-48 for how to respond to our enemies ... including those that may in the past have been our friends.

*"You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so?"*

*Be you therefore perfect even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”*

**3. The Torah’s teachings.** God’s word states that kindness and every good must be afforded toward our enemies.

*“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. If you see the ass of him that hates you lying under his burden, and would forbear to help him, you shall surely help with him”.* Exodus 23:4-5.

*“If your enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for you shall heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward you”.* Proverbs 25:21-22.

**4. New Testament teachings.** Paul and the other writers of the New Testament elaborated upon the truths of God — as did Old Testament writers — by emphatically stating that we are to treat those that mistreat us with kindness and consideration, thus “heaping coals of fire” upon their heads, and allowing God Himself to mete out whatever punishment is appropriate for the offending part according to His perfect judgement.

*“Recompense no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”.* Romans 12:17-21.

*“But and if you suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of*

*their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear: having a good conscience that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better if the will of God be so, that you suffer for well doing than for evil doing. For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the spirit”.* I Peter 3:14-18.

## **Our True Friend Who Will Never Let Us Down**

Our Savior has unequivocally stated that He would never leave us nor forsake us, even to the end of the age.

*“Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [eon]”.* Matthew 28:19-20.

He calls us friends if we keep His commandments, and lay down our lives for our brethren, and for Him (John 15:13-14). Moreover, He calls us His brothers, sisters, and mother if we do the will of the Father (Matthew 12:50). This is the sort of friendship that will never die, and we can be certain that He will never back out of this relationship like some people are prone to do with us. He makes clear that whenever He has begun a great work in us, He will be faithful to complete it (Philippians 1:6).

God says that the saints will be true to their brethren, and “nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165), including the shortcomings of fellow

saints. Even Paul and Barnabas, who had a falling out at one point in their ministry (Acts 15:36-40), were restored in their friendship later on (I Corinthians 9:6; Colossians 4:10).

We need to understand how, when we seem to have lost every last one of our friends, God will always be there with you and assure you that there are others who are standing right by you, even if you are unaware of their presence. Recall how Elijah fled from Jezebel after killing the 850 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and on Mount Sinai found Yahweh in a “still small voice”, which said, “*Yet have I left me 7,000 in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him*” (I Kings 19:18). Elijah had true friends he had never even met! Like himself, they were a part of the “... *remnant according to the election of grace*” (Romans 11:5).

In the face of violent opposition from former friends who deserted him, David emphatically stated,

*“As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud, and*

*He will hear my voice”*. Psalm 55:16-17.

*“Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved”*. Psalm 55:22.

*“In God will I praise His word: in the Lord will I praise His word. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. Your vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto You. For You have delivered my soul from death: will not you deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?”* Psalm 56:10-13.

We have the direct promises of God that despite all of the turmoil in the world around us, including sometimes being rejected by those whom we thought loved us and would stick with us through thick and thin, that we must suffer these insults of the present age in order to be His Sons (Romans 8:17). We have the absolute guarantee that though our trials are many, He will deliver us out of them all (Psalm 34:19).