

## Returning Evil with Good

Psalm 35: 9-14

Have you ever had a close friend or relative turn on you, betraying your kindness and destroying the relationship? The phrase we commonly use today is “being stabbed in the back.” No doubt we all have dealt with such acts of betrayal and mistreatment by those we loved and trusted. Often such wounds are the hardest to understand and take the longest to heal.

The text before us reveals such a situation in the life of David. He had been betrayed by those who once were close to him. His close friends had now become his greatest foes. We have stepped into the middle of what is commonly known as an imprecatory psalm. Having been betrayed and mistreated, David pled with the Lord to deal with those who sought to harm him. He prayed for God to administer justice according to His divine righteousness.

I am interested in the middle portion of this psalm because it reveals the true character of David while dealing with betrayal and hurt. Human nature desires to respond to adverse situations in similar kind. The flesh says we are obligated to return the favor, make them feel some of the pain we have felt. While this may be the attitude of the flesh, it is not the approach a believer should take. I hope the text will provide the direction we need when facing similar situations. Let's examine the [virtues](#) of David as we consider: [Returning Evil with Good](#).

**I. The Security of the Believer** (9-10) – Here we discover the assurance and security David enjoyed, even though he had been betrayed by his friends. He refused to allow the difficulty he faced to consume his being. Consider:

**A. His Rejoicing** (9) – [And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation](#). As we consider this statement in context of the passage, such rejoicing would follow David's deliverance from those who sought to afflict him. It is apparent however that he placed his faith and trust in the Lord, knowing God was able and willing to provide.

- Those in Christ have every reason to rejoice. While men may harm our flesh and hurt our feelings, we are secure in the Lord. He has redeemed us from sin, reconciled us to God, and provided eternal life. Keeping an eternal perspective can promote an attitude of rejoicing even in the midst of great adversity.

**B. His Resolve** (10a) – [All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee?](#) David declared his entire being rejoiced in the Lord and offered praise for His gracious provision, even in the midst of

despair. David was committed to offering praise and recognizing the grace of God with all that he possessed. His God was greater than those who sought his demise.

- We too need to develop a heart of praise and rejoicing. It is easy to worship the Lord when the sun is shining and we are standing on the mountain top. We can even muster a word of thanksgiving in the midst of some difficulties. However, we need the resolve David possessed – a willingness to praise the Lord with our entire being regardless of the circumstances we face. Our situation can never change the grace of God bestowed on our behalf. Even in the midst of great adversity, we have received much more than we deserve! Even in the valley, God is good.

**C. His Reliance** (10) – *All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?* While men sought David's hurt, he rested securely in the Lord. They may have enjoyed a decided advantage over David, but he had a source of strength unmatched by this world. The Lord was more than able to deliver him from any situation he faced.

- The struggles we face are diverse and numerous. We have no way of knowing what a day will bring forth, but we can face each day with calm assurance, knowing the Lord is by our side and able to deliver from any trial we encounter. *Psalm 102:17 – He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.* <sup>[19]</sup> *For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth.*

**II. The Adversity of the Believer** (11-12) – David again speaks of the wrongs committed against him by those he once trusted. Surely we too can relate to such adversity. Consider:

**A. The Accusation** (11) – *False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.* David was forced to face false accusation, being accused of acts he had not committed. There was no truth or mercy in their accusation, and yet they declared their lies to be truth. Likely we all have faced false accusation and the pain associated with it. This is especially hard to endure when it comes from those close to us, while knowing their words bear no truth.

**B. The Appropriation** (12) – *They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.* Many believe this psalm was written as David fled from King Saul. No doubt this was especially hard for David. He had faithfully served the king, risking his own life for the benefit of the kingdom. He had brought Saul honor through his acts of bravery and yet his faithfulness had been repaid with evil

and acts of betrayal. David was amazed at the evil he was forced to endure simply for being a faithful servant of the king.

- Such actions are never easy to endure, especially when those we love and trust turn on us and seek our hurt. Likely most of us have faced such a situation, with our kindness and faithfulness being repaid with unkindness and acts of betrayal.

**C. The Desperation** (12) – *They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.* While David relied upon the Lord and sought to remain strong, he had to admit such actions brought great hurt to his life. Their betrayal had brought pain in the deepest recesses of his heart. He readily admitted his heart had been broken by the betrayal of his friends.

- We can try to hide it or deny the pain, but the reality remains – betrayal hurts, especially from those we love and trust. It isn't easy to accept that our love and support has been rewarded with evil and false accusation. How we respond to these situations will have an effect on the healing process and reveal much about our character.

**III. The Integrity of the Believer** (13-14) – Through these verses we discover the integrity David possessed and the influence it had on his life when facing such betrayal. Consider:

**A. His Compassion** (13a) – *But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth.* This is quite amazing and only possible through the help of the Lord. David speaks of those who had mistreated him. He revealed that when they were sick and in need, he shared in their suffering. Human nature would say they are getting what they deserve, but the love of Christ compels us to show compassion, even to those who have wronged us. Our Lord prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him. We need to share His compassion, even when we feel it is not earned or deserved.

**B. His Intercession** (13b) – *I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.* It is one thing to offer compassion to those who have wronged us, but something else entirely to intercede on their behalf. Although these had severely mistreated David, he humbly prayed for them in their time of need.

- This is quite difficult to accomplish, but it is possible with the help of the Lord. While we may find it difficult to do, it is actually what is most needed. God may not choose to bless them,

but when we reach the place spiritually that we can pray for them, we are beginning to experience spiritual and emotional healing ourselves.

**C. His Reaction** (14a) – *I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother.* David responded to the needs of those who abused him no differently than he would have a close friend or brother. He prayed for them and behaved in a way that portrayed grace while honoring the Lord.

- I don't know about you, but this can be difficult for me. My flesh doesn't want to treat those who have mistreated me with love and kindness. I don't want to pray for them or even be around them. However, if we are to be what the Lord desires of us, we must be willing to respond to those who have wronged us the same as we would those who are close to us. We must be willing to treat them as if they were a friend or brother.

**D. His Devotion** (14b) – *I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.* Again David revealed his refusal to allow the actions of others dictate his existence. He determined to do the right thing, just as he would in regard to his own mother. He was devoted to treating all men with grace, while maintaining his integrity and serving the Lord.

- Do we possess that type of devotion? Are we willing to forgive the transgressions of others in order to be what the Lord desires of us? Do we view our testimony and service to the Lord more importantly than having our way and repaying a wrong committed against us? These are hard questions, but they require our consideration.

**Conclusion:** As we close, I will admit this study brought back memories of past hurts. As I prepared this message I was reminded of those who have falsely accused me and hurt me in the past. I cannot allow those past hurts to reign in my life. Doing so will only foster more anger, bitterness, and hurt. As believers we have an obligation to choose forgiveness. The relationship may never be what it once was, but we can have peace with the Lord knowing we are not harboring bitterness in our hearts.

If you are struggling with past hurts, bring those to the Lord and find the strength you need to overcome. Maybe you are aware of a situation between those you love and want to come and pray for reconciliation in their relationship. If you are unsaved, I urge you to respond to the grace of our Lord extended on your behalf. No greater injustice was ever committed than the crucifixion of Christ for our sin, and yet no greater love and forgiveness has ever been shown!