

Date: February 25-26, 2023

Title: *Hidden Hurts #8 - Betrayal (Absalom)*

Scripture: 2 Samuel 15

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Chances are that at some point in your life, you've experienced betrayal. It may have been when you were a grade-school kid. You thought you had some friends on the playground but then some of your friends decided you couldn't be in that group. You first felt that little sting of betrayal. Maybe it was when you were in middle school or high school, you shared something that was significant to you with some friends. You thought it was in confidence but then that friend went and told it to other people. Or maybe you were in college or a young adult, and you extended yourself in some way to a friend. Then that friend turned on you, turned the situation around which made your whole life for a season feel a little disorienting.

Maybe you had somebody that you loved, they said forever, but it wasn't. They said it would only be you, but you weren't. Maybe, in your career, you gave an opportunity to somebody. Then that somebody did something that put your whole business in jeopardy. Again, you extended kindness and gave them another opportunity. Then a few years later, they turned around and pursued your customers against you. You ended up losing something. There is a myriad of ways that we experience betrayal. Chances are if you have not experienced it yet, you will. It may be with a sibling, spouse, child, or parent. It can come in small ways and big ways.

Over the last eight weeks, we have been journeying with David in the Old Testament. David's stories are primarily told in 1 and 2 Samuel. We have looked at his life and the lives of some people in his life. We have seen some of the hidden hurts that exist. Today we're going to look at the hidden hurt of betrayal. We're looking primarily at part of his story with his son, Absalom.

We met Absalom last week. Absalom was one of David's sons. Absalom watched his half-brother Amnon, rape Absalom's sister Tamar. Absalom waits until the opportune moment and kills Amnon. After Absalom kills Amnon, he comes back to Jerusalem. David never calls for Absalom to come and see him. They're living in the same town, which isn't a huge town, and they never cross paths. This is told in 2 Samuel 14. Absalom decides to set fire to a field of crops in order to get attention from his dad.

Even in the Bible, kids would sometimes do rebellious things to get attention from their parents. Even adult children sometimes did that. It worked in the sense that he gets an audience with David. Absalom goes into David and in a perfunctory way, David renews the relationship. Then Absalom goes out. What we are told happens next is summed up in the heading of 2 Samuel 15, "Absalom's conspiracy, in the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him. He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, "What town are you from?" He would answer, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you." And Absalom would add, "If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that they receive justice."

Absalom sits at the gate of Jerusalem, as people come to Jerusalem, he would say, "The King David, my dad, is never going to hear what you have to say. If you appoint me judge, I'll take care of you because we want justice. King David is not for justice." Now, Absalom gains some more support and more people. In verse thirteen, "A messenger came and told David, "The hearts of the people of Israel are with Absalom." Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom."

David is now on the run. His son has brought together a group of people, in a military coup, to take possession of the kingdom from David. Now, certainly from this story, we can see that this is not just that Absalom woke up one day power-hungry, saying I want the kingdom. In fact, what he does, at least in part, comes because he felt like David had betrayed the family.

By looking quickly at this story, one thing we learn, it is possible that sometimes when we feel betrayed, the person we feel betrayed by has felt betrayed by us or has been betrayed by us. The reason I say this is because sometimes we can do to avoid the feeling of betrayal, by simply understanding that we have done something that contributed to how somebody else feels and trying to have a conversation. As far as we know, David never did the conversation which probably would have helped. If he had just called up Absalom and said come on over to the palace, let's have a beer on the back deck and talk this all through, maybe it would have been different. But what he does instead is simply ignores the situation.

I think it's important to also notice that when somebody opposes us in some way or challenges us, it is not necessarily betrayal. Betrayal is when somebody comes against us, involves other people, and assigns sinister motives to us. At first, Absalom comes against David in a sense of challenging him. Then when he does not get resolve, he moves stronger into it.

A lot of times we will have a poor conversation. We'll want to assign a motive for what the other person did or said. Then if they turn around and do that to us, we want them to say, I'm going to give you credit for your intentions. Do you know how that works? It's where we say, I want you to not hold me responsible for my poor actions or my poor choice of words. I want you to give me credit for my heart and my intention. What we do when somebody else is involved is say, you said this. I don't care what your intention is. My point is just to say sometimes the best thing we can do is simply come to a point where we say, I am going to try to avoid feeling betrayed by

dealing with the situation in a different way. But even when we do that, there are times we will be betrayed. And what happens here is Absalom comes against David. Even though he may have had a valid reason, he did not have reason to start a coup to try to overthrow the government of his dad.

In Psalm 3, we see a little bit of how David experiences this. The title of Psalm 3 says it all, "A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom. LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!" Now they're not just 50 men. There are probably thousands who've aligned themselves against David. And he feels alone, overwhelmed, and a little hopeless. Then he says, "Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him." This is not just a statement of people saying we're a little concerned about David. This is the moment of impugning his motives. God won't deliver him because he hasn't acted honorably. He does not deserve to be king. He acted poorly.

This is that moment where they assume the worst and then David says, "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." What you see throughout this Psalm is David's sense of aloneness, desperation, and anger. All are part of his experience with betrayal.

We see his aloneness, in the sense of having how many against him. We see his anxiety because verse five says, "I lie down and sleep." The implication is it wasn't easy for him to sleep until he turned to the Lord. We see his sense of anger in verse seven, "Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked." If you've been betrayed, undoubtedly you have felt, in some sense, overwhelmed, alone, angry, anxious, and disappointed. Those are all experiences that David has here.

But in this little phrase in verse 3, "But you." I believe there's something for us here. We can say that God is worthy of our confidence and that God is there when we cry.

Let's look at these two things. First, God is worthy of our confidence. We see this in five different words or phrases that appear in the Psalm. In verse 3, "But you, LORD, are a shield around me."

There are two primary words that can be used for shield in Hebrew. The first word is a word that has the idea of an encompassing shield that goes all the way around you and you can duck behind it. What would happen in battle, people would go, and they would set the shields next to each other. The entire battalion could then advance by taking the shield, moving it a little, ducking behind it, then quickly rising, shooting, and ducking behind again. They would all move together.

That is not the word that David uses here. The word he uses is for a small shield. A little shield that was used in hand-to-hand combat when you were fighting alone. What that means when David says, "You are my shield", he's actually saying, "God, you know when I'm alone, and I'm alone right now. It feels like I'm fighting this all by myself. But you are still here with me."

This also means, if God is your shield and you're in a battle, you're in something displeasing to you. It's not an accident that you're here. One of the things that sometimes happen is people want to say God is good when good things happen, but when things happen that are displeasing to me, God must not be present. But if God is our shield, what it means is that even when we're in hand-to-hand combat and alone, God has not abandoned us. That means, in some way, God is working something for our good. Because we can say he'll never leave me. He will never forsake me.

Now I realize that some of us here will say well, that doesn't feel good to me because my betrayal was significant. My hurt is significant. How could a good God let this happen to me? And the issue of God being a shield means that God doesn't let things happen without his knowledge, without his hand being engaged in it.

Maybe the best way to think about this is if you were a kid and you grew up, which is all of us. You had parents. Some of us had great parents. Some of us didn't have great parents. Some of us had protective parents and overprotective parents. Some of us had parents who were very laissez-faire in terms of what they let happen in our lives. But what you know as a kid, is that parents, human parents, have a limit to their ability to protect you from things. Sooner or later, as a parent, you can't protect your kid from all the mean kids at school, from falling, or from failing. You just can't do it. But when they're young, what you try to do is have your child grow in such a way that you allow enough hardship, that they develop the capacity to handle hardship and to function in the world.

You knew this as a kid when you grew up, sometimes your parents would let you fall, would let you struggle, so that you would come out the other side able to do it. Because if a parent is always saying no, I'm going to wrap you in bubble wrap and you'll never experience anything, you don't become an adult. And if God is your shield, you can have confidence in his character, not as a flawed earthly parent, but as a divine, perfect parent who is able to say, I'm not letting things into your life unless I have your best interest at heart.

There is a second word that's here. It says, "But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory." In Hebrew, the concept of glory is the concept of weightiness, heaviness. What happens when God is in our glory, our heaviness, our weight? What we give weight to are things that can't give to us what we're giving to it. What I mean by this is when we basically say, I'm giving weight to this relationship or to this person, what happens is if that person is not reliable, even if they mean to be reliable, what happens is we're vulnerable because we've given them weight.

If we give weight to our career. Well, what happens is when our career does not go exactly the way we want, it feels like it crumbles. If we give weight to our physical

appearance. What happens is sooner or later our physical body will let us down. If we give weight to our resources, even no matter how successful we are, it's giving weight to something that can't handle it so sometimes what God does is he allows us to experience the tremors of things that aren't sustainable. So we'll say, "God, you're my God, you're my glory. You're the only safe place for me to put all my faith and trust." God's character is reliable. He is our shield, and he is our glory.

Then it says here, "You are the lifter of my head," or "the one who lifts my head high." This is significant because when we look around, we're almost certain to be disheartened. But when we look up, we'll be empowered by what God has. I have a garbage bag here with some trash in it. Let me just ask you this, "I would like somebody here to just volunteer to take my trash and to carry it with you for the next 17 years, do I have any volunteers?" At the last service, there were several who raised their hands. You are less likely. I felt like I was in a revival. Now, why didn't you volunteer? Because who would want to carry somebody's trash around for years? It's a ridiculous thing that none of us would want to do.

And yet this is exactly what we do when we carry around bitterness from what has happened to us, from what somebody did, even if it was something ridiculous. When our head is not lifted, it's almost like trash is unavoidable. It's like we have this trash, and we don't know how we can ever get rid of it. But when we have God as the lifter of our head, what happens is we lift our heads and we say, I don't need to carry this anymore.

Not only that, if you are somebody who has been betrayed, been hurt by somebody else, if you continue to hang on to it, what you're doing in part is you're letting that person continue to give you trash to carry around for the foreseeable future. But if God is your place of confidence, you can say, "God, you're my shield. Nothing comes into my life that you haven't been aware of and ordained. To God is my glory. There is

nothing that I'm going to give weight to that is more to God. And God is the lifter of my head. He'll lift my eyes." Then we see that he's also our sustainer.

This is what David says in verses 4 and 5, "I call out to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain. I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. Then in verse seven, "Arise, LORD! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked." That is not a prayer that you're often instructed to pray, right? But here's what, at least some commentators say when David says "Strike the enemies on the jaw," he is saying to God, "Would you rebuke the people who are coming against me unjustly?"

This is important because even though he knows that he didn't do everything right, he believed that he was still ordained by God to be the king. When he says to break the teeth of the wicked, that this is to render them useless. Now, how God was going to do that, we don't know. Some people say this is simply David's anger coming out and it's an inappropriate prayer. Others say this is completely justified. But either way, what you see is that David says, "God, you will sustain me. Arise, work in this situation, because I know that you're the one who sustains me." You see, sometimes God will make moves in our lives that we wouldn't have made because God sees things that we don't see. And if we understand that God sustains us, then what we can do is we can say even when something negative comes into our life, maybe God is using this for a positive.

I'll never forget when I was first working as a pastor, I was in the city of Chicago. There was a situation where I met with a couple and the man had strayed outside the marriage, the woman was devastated. It was one of the first times that my wife and I had walked with a couple in this kind of scenario. I will never forget her because she rightly went through her season of anger, feeling betrayed, and all these different emotions. And I remember years later, we saw them at a thing, and this was her

comment, "I wouldn't go back and undo all the pain because our marriage has become better today than it ever was before going through the pain."

Now that isn't everybody's experience. I know that. But the point is, what she was able to do was to say, God has sustained, God has worked, and somehow God is at work in this. Sometimes God will bring about changes in your life, maybe through the betrayal of somebody, that will save you from something else down the line. We just don't always see.

This leads us to the 5th concept here in verse 8, "From the LORD comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people." From the Lord comes deliverance, (some translations say Salvation), and may your blessings be on your people. So he says here, God, you bring salvation. Sometimes we think that salvation or deliverance means that God changes our circumstances to our liking when the reality is that deliverance may look different than how we want it to look. And sometimes what God does is he brings about deliverance that is our actual best even though it isn't exactly what we want.

There's a poem that Corrie ten Boom wrote called "Life Is But a Weaving." Corrie ten Boom was a Dutch Christian who lived during the time of World War II when the Nazis invaded the Netherlands and took Jewish people to extermination camps. Corrie ten Boom and her family helped 800 Jewish people escape that fate. They hid people in their home. They were eventually caught and shipped to one of the concentration camps. There she saw hundreds, if not thousands of people die, including her sister. She authors this poem,

"Life is but a Weaving."

My life is but a weaving

Between my God and me.

I cannot choose the colors
He weaveth steadily.
Of't times He weaveth sorrow;
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper
And I the underside.
Not 'til the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Will God unroll the canvas
And reveal the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful
In the weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned
He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him.

I mentioned that this was from Corrie ten Boom, in part, because I don't know if I experienced what she experienced I could write those words or if I could affirm those words. But what I also know is that I want to be able to turn to the character of God when I walk through hidden hurts.

And like probably most of you here, I've experienced the hurt of betrayal at the hands of people I've trusted or given myself to in some way. The only thing that keeps any of us, at that point, from being devastated is by saying somehow God's hand is at work in this.

That leads us to the second kind of big observation from this Psalm 3:4, "I call out to the LORD." That God is there even when we cry out. In the original language, this is in the imperfect tense which means it is a repeated cry. You don't just cry out to God once and say oh, there it's done. He was crying out to God over and over again. That is the force of this. David says, "He answers me from his holy mountain." Now, what is God's holy mountain? Most would say that refers to Jerusalem. Where is Absalom at the time David is writing when he's fled from Absalom? He is in Jerusalem on the throne. I love this, David says, "I cried out to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy mountain." God is still in charge. Absalom is not in charge.

He says I'm crying out. Now, what else do we know about Psalms? Psalms are generally music because it says, for the director of music, for the choir director. To cry out to God, was David writing a song basically to say, I want people to sing this? Not only that, in most translations of the Bible, the word *Selah* appears three times in this text. It's not in the NIV, but it's in the footnotes. If you go down to the footnote, it says *Selah*, (a word of uncertain meaning). *Selah* appears often in the Psalms, what most commentators think that *Selah* means is one of two things. One meaning, it was a call from the worship leader to sing it louder. So when somebody is up here and they're like, "Hey, sing this, it's biblical." What they're doing is they're saying, "Sing this. Cry out to God." The other meaning for *Selah* meant to pause for reflection. So, it could mean either of those things.

And here's the point, crying out to God isn't just you privately praying things, but it involves coming and proclaiming the truth of who God is with a group of people. This is one reason that online church has a lid because you don't come and sing songs. I know how it goes. I sit through the weekend service here at Orchard Hill. Of the eight services I sit through, three of them every weekend, when I say sit through, I don't mean I sit passively, I sit here. When you sing the same songs, I mean if any of you think we sing the same songs all the time, try doing it three times every weekend.

What happens is I sit here, and different things hit me every time. You're singing a song and your response is, "Oh my goodness, I have not internalized that truth."

See, the music isn't just the warmup to the main event. I mean, the main event is preaching. The music is an affirmation. It's the moment where you cry out, God takes the truth, and he internalizes it into our hearts and lives. We are saying God is the sustainer. God is the one who will never let me down. God is my shield, my glory, my weight. We need that cry in our hearts in order to have perspective in our day-to-day life.

Crying out to God was something else here too. David asked God to deliver him. Psalm 3:7 says, "Arise, LORD! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked." Sometimes in circles that are more reformed in faith, (which we are part of), people tend to say, "Well, I don't really want to ask God for something because God's already determined what will happen. So, I don't need to pray for certain things."

But there's a biblical precedent to say, "God, would you change this?" Jesus cried out to God and asked him to change something. Jesus was about to go to the cross, in Luke 22:42, Jesus prays, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." What does Jesus do when he prays? He says I'm about to be crucified. I'm about to go through physical suffering. I'm about to be emotionally separated from the Father and experience the weight of sin. Father, if it's possible, would you take this cup from me? Would you change my circumstance? Then what does he say? "Not my will, but yours."

See, genuine faith is being able to say, God, I would love it if you would change the circumstance, but I will defer to your wisdom, your knowledge, even if it isn't what I like, what I would choose, or if I just don't get it. It's the bottom side of the tapestry I see. You see the upper side. Because I trust your character, I can trust that you are at

work. Sometimes God may be working through what feels like a betrayal to you and me by removing somebody from our life. He sees what we don't see and makes moves we wouldn't make. Trust is saying, "God, I trust that you're at work."

David, in expressing this trust, did not have a sense of real control. He didn't have a basis to say, "I am justified completely." Jesus in doing so was able to say, "God, I know I haven't brought this on myself." Now we live on this side of the cross, so we can say, "God, because Jesus has gone to the cross and I come to him acknowledging my sin. You have taken the brunt of the punishment for sin." Even if there are consequences in this life, I can live with hope about what the future holds. Because of that truth, when things happen that are displeasing to me, instead of being overwhelmed with fear or with guilt, I can say, "There is a God who has promised good to me."

David says in Psalm 3:6, "I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side." Warren Wiersbe said it this way, "How well we sleep sometimes indicates how much we really trust the Lord." What happens is we're up being anxious about something. We're holding on to something that the God who never sleeps is holding so that we can sleep. Tim Keller put it like this, "To the degree that we embrace Jesus Christ, we will become impervious to fear." When we embrace the character of God, when we cry out to Him knowing that our standing and our status are rooted in who Jesus Christ is and what He's done for us, we can say whatever is happening, I trust the character of God.

You know what this is like. If you have ever been in a strange setting in the dark and heard some noises that are disconcerting. What's the first thing that you do? Get up and turn on the light because you want to see what's going on. Do you know what? Seeing the character of God and crying out to God is turning on the light.

It is through worship, through the word, through community, and through crying out to God in prayer. Being able to say, God, I want to see what's going on. I am seeing what is real. I am letting you lift my head to the reality that these noises will not ultimately be my undoing. You are at work.

Jesus experienced betrayal. The betrayals that you and I experience in this life are in some way for us to understand that God has felt betrayed by us. We can run into the arms of the goodness of Jesus Christ. That is where we will find our hope.

Here is how I'd just like to conclude our time today. Please bow your heads and close your eyes for a moment. I'd just like to invite you to have a moment of *Selah*, not shouting louder, singing louder, but of quiet, just to say God, here's my hidden hurt. Here's what's most hard, most challenging for me right now. Cry out to God and affirm who He is to you as your shield, your glory, the lifter of your head, your sustainer, your deliverer. Ask him to deliver you while acknowledging that God's will is ultimately what you want, not your will, but his.

Maybe you're here today and you say you know, I'm not really a church person, a person of faith, not sure about where God is. I just want to tell you the whole story of the Scripture is that there's a God who cares about your life and he has gone to great lengths in Jesus Christ to not just make a way for you to relate to him, and make that way known. You don't need to walk through the hurts of this world without hope, without a belief that there's a God who's for you, who is your shield. He can become your shield today by acknowledging your need for Jesus Christ and turning toward him. You can do that even here and now, just simply by saying, "God, I know that I don't live up to my own standard, let alone yours. So I come to Jesus today and ask for your forgiveness through him, on account of him." You can begin living with God as your shield, your glory, the lifter of your head.

God, today I pray that you would help each of us to not get stuck carrying the garbage of our hurts, but instead let our heads be lifted up to who you are and what you have for us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thanks for being here. Have a great day!