

“Broken Trust”

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He came in seventh on the all-time list. He came in behind Lincoln, Reagan, FDR and Clinton. Seventh! That’s where Americans a few years ago ranked the Father of their Country, George Washington. The poll asked people to choose the nation’s greatest presidents, and they decided that Washington came in seventh.

Washington fans tried to revive the first president’s image. So instead of the pale face and powdered wig of dollar bill fame, they wanted to use images of Washington as a youthful frontier explorer, surveyor and determined general. With some good PR, people can recover from a negative public image.

Image makeovers are nothing new. History is littered with them. Of all the attempted image makeovers, though, perhaps none is as important as the attempt to remake the image of Judas Iscariot.

Judas is portrayed sometimes as simply a bit too money-hungry. Other times he’s depicted as a disheartened idealist discouraged by Jesus’ way of doing things.

We can understand the reasons for the actions of many of the characters in the crucifixion story: the Romans were doing what they always did to people who threatened the peace, crucify them. Pilate did what he had to do to quell a riot to protect his own skin instead of being just. Even the actions of the Jewish leadership made sense. They were just trying to sustain their own ideas of what was right. You may not like what any of these characters did, but you can understand why they did it. They all acted exactly like we thought they would.

But, not Judas. His actions don’t add up. That’s why we people are so interested in trying to explain and even remake the picture of Judas. It’s also because as the story stands, it seems simply too terrifying and unnerving. Judas showed broken trust.

Maybe Judas was just rotten from the start and it just took a while to show. Or maybe what brought about the sudden change in Judas was the temptation of money, or the lure of power.

But if Judas can’t be explained, we’re left with a traitor without reason. We’re left with one of the twelve most blessed men to ever live, who walked, talked, laughed, and learned with Jesus for three years.

We’ve got a man who rejects it all, betrays it all, and tries to destroy it all. What’s going on? It just doesn’t make any sense, and that’s the scary part.

Think about it: if someone who had all of this going for him could still turn traitor and betray his Lord, then what hope do we have? If one of the chosen twelve blew it and fell prey to sin and evil, then what makes you think you’re secure? If Judas could reject Christ for no good reason, then what’s keeping you from doing the same?

Judas was a good disciple who faithlessly and suddenly goes bad and betrays his Lord. If that’s the case, no one’s safe and can ever be sure that it won’t happen to him. The story of Judas should shake us to our core because when we see Judas fall, we must realize what’s separating us from Judas is nothing!

Judas, blessed by God, could still betray Him. You, blessed by God, can still betray

too, and sometimes you do. No, I don't mean that you sell out Jesus or your friends for hard cash. But you're still tempted to other forms of betrayal. No matter how, betrayal's a matter of broken trust!

Broken trust lies behind so much of the suffering and hurt people experience in their lives. 1 in 2 marriages will end in divorce, and that statistic isn't different for Christians. No marriage ever ends before one or more betrayals. Infidelity, indifference, or a refusal to invest in and love the other can all kill a marriage.

Many families live with broken trust. Children are betrayed by parents who don't take time to talk to them, courage to discipline them, or commitment to listen to them. And children betray parents when they dishonor them. Betrayal shatters homes.

You have broken trust as you betray your Lord when you remain silent when you need to speak His truth in witness. It also breaks trust when you ignore the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel because you fear the opinion of others. Broken trust stops the mission Jesus has given each of us.

These are all acts of betrayal. They all break trust. This is the nature and definition of sin. Sin is failure to honor God and to trust His Word and promise. Sin is broken trust.

When trust's been broken, nothing will work to "fix it." There's nothing left but regret and emptiness. You can't fix broken trust. Break trust and you're faithless.

Open to 2 Corinthians 5. An image makeover does no good at all. What's needed is an identity makeover. You've got to start from scratch. Trust must be re-created. You've got to be remade. That's what God does. He remakes you. Verses 17-18, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."* God gives you a new identity. He recreates trust. You start over from scratch: a new creation.

Judas committed his betrayal with a kiss. Judas' kiss was the kiss of death. The Holy Spirit, the breath of God, breathes into you with the tenderness of a kiss, with the nearness of water on your forehead in Baptism, and bread and wine on your tongues and in your heart in the Lord's Supper.

He breathes His breath into you and you're alive again. You're brand new, a new creation, a new identity, a new you. The Holy Spirit remakes what sin destroys. He gives life to those who are empty and dead inside. Betrayers become God's children. Those guilty of broken trust are forgiven.

Such remarkable giving doesn't come without a price. It costs dearly. Something has to be done about our breaking of trust. Jesus does it on the cross. He takes the penalty. He pays the price. The shame, the suffering, the death are His. And because of what He's done, the forgiveness, the freedom, the joy are ours.

Explanations and understanding don't restore broken trust. Only the incredible forgiveness of Jesus Christ will bring that trust back. Only the new reality of God's new creation can overcome and conquer the reality of broken trust. And it does. In Jesus Christ, you're restored and you're trustworthy again.