

Trusting Through Trials

2Samuel 15:1-37

How many of you brought a bible with you this morning?

That is amazing! It is such a gift for us to be able to own a copy of the Scriptures.

Here is something equally amazing! I'm guessing most if not all of those who brought a bible to church today brought an English bible.

One of the people God used to make that a reality was a man by the name of William Tyndale.

He was born in England in the late 15th century and when he was born there were no English bibles available to people.

In his early years he discovered his gift for languages and became fluent in eight of them including Greek and Hebrew the original languages of the Scriptures.

In those days a person had to obtain special permission to study the Bible and that was rarely granted so he studied in secret.

As he learned the Bible he came to understand that it was no ordinary book, he realized that it is God's word through which he came to know and love Jesus as his saviour.

Soon after he began to share the gospel with others and one day he happened to be talking to a priest and the priest remarked, "I believe it would be better to be without God's law than to be without the pope's law."

The comment upset Tyndale and he replied to the priest, "I defy the pope and all his laws. If God spares my life, I will make it so in England the ploughboys will know more of the Bible than many of the priest do now."

He then made it his mission to translate the Bible into English.

His work angered many and it quickly became too dangerous for him to stay in England.

Having fled his home he found places to continue his work and was able get the NT translated into English and thanks to the recent invention of the printing press the NT began to circulate in English.

Shortly after that he was condemned as a heretic by the Catholic Church which wanted him arrested and brought to trial.

After some close calls he settled in Antwerp and he seemed fairly safe, but sadly he believed himself safer than he truly was.

Tyndale's enemies hired a man by the name of Henry Phillips who pretended to be a friend and gained his confidence.

A short time later Phillips betrayed Tyndale and he was arrested and condemned to die.

On October 6th, 1536 William Tyndale was put to death for translating the Bible into English.

Thankfully the LORD had enabled him by that point to carry to work of translation to a point where it could not be stopped.

He had translated over 70% of the entire Bible and his work was enormously influential on future English translations.

[As I considered the text that is before us this morning I thought of Tyndale. A man who dearly loved the LORD who was betrayed by someone close to him and faced great trials as a result. That is where we meet King David this morning in **2Samuel 15:1-37**. Called by the LORD to lead His people and betrayed by his own son. It is a tough situation, but like Tyndale we find the king trusting in the LORD through his trial. Since trials are a part of life in this fallen world we would be wise to pay attention to the lessons that God has for us in this text. The first lesson shows us where trials can come from. We see in the first six verses that...]

Point #1 – Selfish ambition produces trying times among God’s people. (Verses 1-6)

When people are bound and determined to have things the way they want, they will think very little of stirring up trouble among believers.

After being in exile for three years and kept out of the king’s court for two, Absalom had been restored by his father David as we read at the end of chapter fourteen.

Instead of setting his mind on serving his father and the LORD, the opening verse of chapter fifteen show us that his mind was set on serving himself.

Look with me at **verse 1**.

Chariots in the ancient world represent power and prestige. Having ‘fifty men run before his chariot removes all doubt as to his motivation.’

He is trying to show the people his greatness.

On top of that verse 2 tells us that his would ‘*rise early and stand beside the way of the gate.*’

His rising early tells us something of the ambition he has for this task. He wants to make sure he gets there to interact with as many people as possible.

Absalom would look for people coming to the king with grievances.

Verses 3-5 tell us what he would say to those with a dispute.

What is his goal here? Is it true justice?

It can’t be. If he is saying to everyone “your claims are good and right” can that possibly be true?

What is he doing? He is telling people what they want to hear.

Why is he doing that?

He is doing that to undermine the king of God's choosing.

His basic point is that the king won't help you, but if I were in charge you would get what you deserve!

In doing this with everyone who came to the king for judgement verse 6 tells us "Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel!"

That sets the stage for one of David's greatest trials.

[This reminded me of Jonathan Edwards getting fired from his church for only allowing believers to participate in communion. People who cared little for the word of God, but had become influential in the church rallied against their pastor and showed him the door so that they could have things the way they wanted.]

The same thing is still true today.

I know people who had things like this happen in their families.

Husbands, wives, kids, siblings, sometimes grandparents or cousins say and do things that put their family through the ringer because they are primarily concerned with themselves.

It happens at work. People who lie and gossip to get ahead and put your job at risk in the process.

Sadly, it happens in the church as well. People desiring power and influence create factions and feed grievances and in the process create sleepless nights and in some cases ruin lives.

[When pride and ambition gain traction you can be sure that some kind of trial is on the horizon. That is the case for King David on account of the ambition of his son. If we think back to chapter thirteen we will remember Absalom is a man who plays the long game. After meeting people at the gate for four years he is ready to put his plan to take the throne into action. He does that by going to the king and asking him for something. What he says shows us something important. It show us that...]

Point #2 – Those who bring trials to God's people often sound religious. (Verses 7-12)

While those outside the church can inflict pain upon believers, the greatest damage is often done by those who pass themselves off as knowing the LORD but in reality are motivated by sinful desires.

We hear the religious words from Absalom in verses 7-8.

He knows his father is devoted to the worship of the LORD both in his personal life and for the people of Israel and he exploits it.

If he just walks into the throne room and says, “Hey dad that is my chair” his plan would fail right away.

He has to get out of the city to put his plan into action and he uses the cover story of a vow to do it.

It is interesting that David raises no questions about why Absalom has delayed so long in keeping his vow, it is likely his willful ignorance as a father and so instead of questions he simply says to his son in verse 9, “Go in peace.”

Having used worship as an excuse he puts his plan into action. Verses 10-12

Hebron is a very significant choice.

It is where Absalom was born.

It is the place where David reigned as king over Israel for seven years before coming to Jerusalem.

It was just far enough away from Jerusalem to give him time to assemble his forces and close enough that he could turn around and attack fairly quickly.

Veiling his rebellion in religion allows him to draw away 200 men from Jerusalem who were unaware of what was really happening.

He does more religious things by offering sacrifices.

These sacrifices are either to continue the story of the vow, or they are offered as part of an enthronement ceremony.

Either way it seems that he is using the Name of the LORD in vain because he is using religion to overthrow the one who God had chosen to sit on the throne.

Absalom convinces one of David’s counselors, a man named Ahithophel, to betray the king and join him and it says in verse 12 that ‘the conspiracy grew strong’ which spells trouble to David.

A veneer of religion is a big part of what allows Absalom to bring this trial into David’s life.

Little has changed brothers and sisters.

Many churches and many individual believers have had to endure a great deal on account of people who sound religious.

It has been my experience that people who wish to bring liberalism and false teaching into the church often use religious words like gospel, missions, love, justice, and alike but they mean something far different than what has historically been meant by those words.

One of the phrases that is often used today is, “God told me...”

Some of the most destructive movements of our time are launched by people who say such things.

[What do the Scriptures teach us to do? They tell us to “test the spirits to see if they are from God.” How do we do that? Be evaluating everything in the light of the written word of God. Idolatrous people who can speak a little Christianese can bring tremendous turmoil to the church. When that happens there is something else that often happens at the same time. We can see it here as David gets word of his son’s true intentions. This is something to be tremendously thankful for. It is that...]

Point #3 – Trials often reveal faithful friends. (Verses 13-23)

When people stick by us for the sake of doing what is right in moments where the world is providing them will powerful reasons to walk away they show their love to be genuine.

In verse 13 the news of the betrayal comes to David and we read this in verses 14-15.

This is a serious as it gets.

David understands that the lives of everyone loyal to him are on the line here.

He does not have the resources in the city to defend against an assembled force so the only thing he can do is run away.

If we think about the situation purely from a perspective of worldly benefit, what is the course of action that makes the most sense for David’s servants?

It would be to stay in the city and promise to serve Absalom.

Many of David’s servants, however, choose to do the right thing instead of the easy thing.

Verse 18 tells us that all those loyal to the king including a small fighting force that has been with him a long time stick by his side.

Of particular note is a man named Ittai. Let’s listen in on the conversation David has with him in **verses 19-22**.

A foreigner whose heart had been changed from idolatry to love for the living God chooses to remain faithful to the true king. Amazing.

Things were bad for sure and that revealed the genuine loyalty of those close to the king.

[Stress often reveals the quality of things. A few months ago I was making a project and needed some wheels to carry a load of about 200lbs. I got wheels that said they could handle 700lbs, but when I put the load on them they folded. It is one thing to say a product can handle the load it is another to actually do it.]

No doubt David had many people express their loyalty to him over the years, but I wonder how many went over to the good looking young prince when he proclaimed himself king.

[No trial is ever fun that is for sure, but one of things they can show us is the faithfulness of genuine friends. As Christians we have the most powerful foundation for faithfulness possible. Being bound together in faith, being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and resolving together to seek first the kingdom of heaven. These things must produce in us a love for one another that all the forces of evil cannot break. Trials often reveal whether or not that is the case. As some of those faithful to David come out of the city they are carrying something of great importance, the Ark of the Covenant. David's reaction to their bringing the ark shows us another important lesson. It shows us that...

Point #4 – Through trials we need to trust the Lord not created things. (Verses 24-29)

The hope of a true believer rests with our unseen, Omnipotent, Omnipresent creator of all things who unchangingly acts according to His own good purposes, and not in weapons, human strength, wealth, rituals, or sacred objects.

Look with me at verse 24.

The Ark was normally kept in a place called the Holy of Holies in a tent the bible calls the Tabernacle.

It was above the Ark is where the LORD caused his visible glory to appear.

Because the people of Israel made a connection between the Ark and the presence/favour of the LORD.

That is surely in the mind of the two priests here. The Ark should go with the true King because God is with the true king.

It is a reasonable thought, but let's look at how David responds to the idea. **Verses 25-29**

David no doubt knows enough history to know that presuming the favour of the LORD based on the presence of the Ark is foolishness.

If we go back to the early part of 1 Samuel we find the Israelites at war with the Philistines and in the initial battle Israel lost.

They thought, let's bring the Ark here and then we will win.

They brought out the Ark putting their trust in an object instead of seeking the LORD and turning from their sin and when they go out to battle they are again defeated and the Ark gets captured by the Philistines.

David doesn't make that mistake here.

Instead, he puts himself at the mercy of the LORD and sends the Ark back into the city along with Abiathar and Zadok and their sons.

Is the Ark sacred? Yes! It was made at the command of God for His worship and glory. Is it a lucky charm that guarantees God's favour? No, not at all.

It is easier than you might think to fall into the trap of trusting in created things.

People enslaved to false religion have prayed to statues, rocks, and trees having spells and rituals through which they endlessly try to appease some god or demon.

You might hear that and think that is very foolish, but people who claim to be Christian have acted in very similar ways.

Wearing a cross as a symbol of faith can be a good thing, but how many have turn such things into good luck charms?

I've seen charlatans on TV selling prayer cloths, vials of water, gold dust, and alike.

Buy this and God will bless you or watch over you or do whatever for you.

That stuff is not Christian!

How many people trust in money and medicine as the end all and be all of life?

Being wise with money and going to the doctor are good things just like the Ark is a good thing, but it is an easy thing to turn them into idols.

[The Christian view of God is that He is sovereign and acts according to His will alone. He is present everywhere, knows all things, and possesses the power to do all that He pleases. No matter where we are or what the circumstances, our lives are in His hands and we can trust Him. David is applying that good theology to his life here. He is trusting in the LORD. That brings us to one more lesson from this text. David is showing us the need to trust the LORD and in these last few verses he also shows us that...]

Point #5 – Through trials we need to trust God and act wisely. (Verses 30-37)

While the Christian is to rest in the power of the LORD and the truth of His word, we are also to do what we can to see that God's will is done on "earth as it is in heaven."

In the steps the David has already taken in fleeing from the city and in sending Abiathar and Zadok back into the city we can see that while he is trusting the LORD he is also taking action.

The sovereignty of God and human responsibility are not opposite ideas as some may think, but rather they are two sides of the same coin.

The scene as the king ascends the Mount of Olives is one of grief and humility.
(Verse 30)

This is a scene of humility and sorrow.

More bad news comes in **verse 31**.

As we will see in chapter 16 the counsel of Ahithophel was second to none in his day and David no doubt saw this as a huge problem to have to contend with a man of such intellectual skill.

What does he do? He turns to the LORD. If this man's wisdom is to be defeated God is going to have to be the One to do it.

Shortly after his prayer his friend meets with him. Listen to verses 32-37.

While the king is trusting the LORD he also avoids being passive.

He puts his own plan into motion against the plans of his son.

It seems likely here that Hushai has been David's friend for many years.

He is clearly distraught over the situation and wants to go with the king to serve him, but David sees that as a bad idea.

Chances are Hushai is getting up there in age and on account of his limitations will be a hindrance rather than a help if he comes along.

On the other hand he could go back risk his life by attempting to get into Absalom's inner circle, counter to advice of Ahithophel, and feed intelligence back to David through the priests Zadok and Abiathar.

Yes David is trusting the LORD but in faith He is taking action.

While trusting the LORD at times is simply a matter of waiting on Him, but more often than not trusting the LORD means acting in faith.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the life of the LORD Jesus.

As I have said many times in our journey through the books of 2 Samuel David is the King of God's choosing but we need a better King and David's life points us to that truth time and again.

This situation is no exception.

Think of the parallels that we can draw here.

David is the rightful king of the Jews and He is being driven out of the city.

Think of the path that he takes.

Through the Kidron Valley and up to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus talks that same walk the night before He dies.

David is walking that way because he has been betrayed by his son and many others including a close advisor.

Jesus is also betrayed by someone close to Him.

David entrusts himself to God, Jesus much more so entrusts Himself to God the Father.

David attempts to act wisely and Jesus acts in perfect wisdom.

It is a great mistake to look at Jesus' betrayal, His time in the garden, His trials, His condemnation, and His death as something He was passive about.

He is taking action every step of the way, He is in complete control the whole time.

He could have called legions of angels, He could have walked through the crowd, He could have spoken a word and defeated His enemies, He could have come down off the cross and healed His own wounds, but instead He acts according to the plans and purposes of the Triune God to die in our place.

If not for that there would be no way for us to be forgiven for all ways in which we have broken God's law. There would be no way for us to be made right with God.

Jesus trusted God, acted in faith, and won the redemption of all who believe in Him.

Just as He always does, God proved faithful by raising Him from the dead and that brothers and sisters is why we can have hope through every trial.

That is why Christ is worth trusting in no matter what may happen.

Trials will come we can be sure of that because that is what the bible tells us, but God will deliver His people from every trial.

If we trust Him He will see us through.