

The Life of David, 2 Samuel 15-19, Trusting God with Trouble, 10/19/25

Jenga- You start with a solid, stable tower — everything balanced, everything in its place. But as the game goes on, you keep pulling out pieces, shifting blocks, stacking them on top, and with every move, the whole thing becomes a little more unsettled. We all know it's only a matter of time before the wrong piece gets pulled, and it all comes crashing down.

That's a picture of David's life as we get to Chapter 15. For years, he's been building — his relationship with God, his integrity, his kingdom, his family, his reputation as a man after God's own heart. But somewhere in the middle of his reign he began to temptations, distractions, sin to lead to bad decisions, and his life and everything in his kingdom began to become unsettled. His sin with Bathsheba in Chapter 11, removed a few blocks, The killing of Uriah several more. His inability to act with justice and restore the honor of his daughter Tamar in chapter 13 another, his failure to resolve the conflict with his son Absalom in chapter 14, another... By the time we reach chapter 15, David's entire world — his throne, his family, his allegiances, his very life — feels like it's collapsing in slow motion.

And maybe you've experienced this too, when life feels like a Jenga tower that's one bad day from toppling. Sometimes like David we do it to ourselves, with our bad decisions, addiction, neglect of our spiritual life, or our marriage and family... And sometimes it is just life in a broken world when trouble comes our way, in waves, financial hardships, job loss, health problems, grief... You've held it together as long as you can, but it just feels like it's one wrong move away from collapsing. The question is: **When trouble shakes our lives, when the tower starts to fall, how do we respond?**

As chapter 15 opens, we see Absalom plotting a takeover of the throne. In v.1–6, Absalom begins a manipulative political campaign to steal the hearts of the people of Israel. This guy would fit right into modern politics.

And it's successful. It's time to make his move. **10 Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say,**

"As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.'"

12 And so the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom's following kept on increasing.

13 A messenger came and told David, "The hearts of the people of Israel are with Absalom."

14 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.

We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin on us and put the city to the sword."

Rather than fight and bring destruction on the city, David chooses to flee with his household. And while most of Israel abandoned him, he still had some loyal followers and military allies. Let me **show you his flight path (MAP)** that will trace where these chapters we are studying today take place.

30 But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot.

Try to step into that scene with David. After all those years hiding in caves, running from Saul through the Judean wilderness, God finally fulfilled His promise — David's been reigning as king for three decades. He's in his sixties now. You'd think this would be the season of peace and stability. And yet here he is again — on the run, barefoot, climbing the Mount of Olives, headed back into exile. Only this time, it's not Saul chasing him — it's his own son.

Can you imagine what's going through his mind? *How did I get here? How did my life turn out this way? How did I let it come to this? Has God abandoned me? Will He ever restore me? Will I ever get my family back?*

You can understand why he's weeping and covering his head. He's grieving the loss of his family, his kingdom, his reputation. He's crushed by betrayal and rejection — he's a broken man. But here's the thing: broken isn't always bad. We often assume that broken means finished, discarded, beyond repair. And that might be true without God.

But David had learned — through caves and coronations, through sin and sorrow — what he once wrote in **Psalms 51:17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.**

Brokenness isn't where God abandons us; it's where He meets us in the humble place where we are finally ready to hear him speak, and discipline us like a good father, and begin to restore us personally to his love and grace.

And we begin to see the humility of his brokenness in his response to Zadok the priest and the Levites with him who are carrying the ark of the covenant to take with David into exile. **25 Then the king said to Zadok, "Take the ark of God back into the city.**

If I find favor in the LORD's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again.

26 But if he says, 'I am not pleased with you,' then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him."

David is essentially saying, "I won't treat the ark like a good-luck charm or a weapon to manipulate God's favor." Instead, David releases control and casts himself entirely into the sovereign arms of God, saying in essence, "Lord, my life is yours — do whatever seems best to You."

This is not the same David we've seen in the last several chapters — the calculating, self-protective, hard-hearted man who tried to manage outcomes and cover sin. This is a humbled David, a changed man. His heart has softened again. He's repentant, aware that he doesn't deserve God's favor, yet confident that mercy still has the final word.

As he's walking barefoot up the Mount of Olives, someone comes with some more bad news. **31** *Now David had been told, "Ahithophel (I call him Ahi Tuna) is among the conspirators with Absalom."* Now this was a big deal because Ahi Tuna isn't just any advisor, he was David's main, trusted advisor. If Warren Buffett is the stock market whisperer, Ahithophel is the king whisperer. *So David prayed, "LORD, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness."*

32 *When David arrived at the summit, where people used to worship God, behold Hushai the Arkite was there to meet him,* No sooner does David send up this humble, desperate prayer for mercy than *Hushai* shows up — another loyal advisor and friend. David immediately recognizes this as God's hand of favor, a sign that the Lord is still with him. Thinking quickly, David sends Hushai back to Jerusalem along with the priests, essentially forming a covert intelligence network — God's version of the ancient CIA — right inside Absalom's court.

And guess what? It works. Hushai gains Absalom's trust and earns a seat at the war table. Fast-forward to chapter 17: Absalom is plotting how to wipe David out. Ahithophel, the brilliant strategist, advises an immediate, surgical strike with twelve thousand men — and honestly, from a purely military standpoint, that plan would have worked. But then Hushai steps in. Calmly, cleverly, he plays to Absalom's ego, suggesting a slower, grander assault — one where Absalom himself leads a massive army in a glorious show of power. And Absalom takes the bait: *"Yeah, big army, me out front — total victory!"*

But Scripture makes clear what's really happening: *v.14 For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm upon Absalom.* Absalom thinks he's in control, calling the shots. But behind all the politics, pride, and planning, God is quietly at work — overruling human schemes to fulfill His own redemptive purpose. Even in exile, David isn't abandoned; the invisible hand of God is still moving the pieces.

Finally in Chapter 18 the battle takes place. With strategic intel across enemy lines, the battle shifts to David's favor even though he's outmanned and out "sworded", it's fierce 20k casualties, We get to the climax in verse **9** *Now Absalom happened to meet David's men.*

Pause in the tape because there is an important detail we skipped last week back in 2 Samuel 14:25–26, that we need to know about Absalom. The narrator gushes over Absalom's appearance — especially his hair: *From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.*

and when he cut the hair of his head once a year it weighed two hundred shekels by the king's weight. 5lbs. Archaeologists actually uncovered a picture of him- [Jason Mamoa]. Well, it must have been close to a year since his last haircut as he's out on the battlefield. *V. 9 He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak,*

Absalom's hair got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.

Seeing a divinely appointed opportunity to end this rebellion, Joab, David's general, sends three spears into his heart as he's hanging there by his hair and kills him...And you think you had a bad hair day! You know what they say, hair today, gone tomorrow. Sorry, I'm done...But you have to admit, for all his style and swagger, this was the *ultimate split end*...OK I'm actually done.

Just like that the rebellion is over, the fighting stops, and David and his allies, on the brink of disaster, get the victory. This news of Absalom's death breaks David's heart, **4 The king covered his face and cried aloud, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"** Even though his son had rebelled, and became his enemy, he was still his son. He was hoping beyond hope that somehow he would be alive and maybe restore the broken relationship. But I believe David knew in his heart that this God's hand of judgement on Absalom for his rebellion against God's chosen king. So David and his allies make the victory march back to Jerusalem for David to secure his rightful place as king over a united Israel.

That's as far as we're going to go in the story because we want to go back to our opening question: **When trouble shakes our lives, how do we respond?**

Think back to the last time you couldn't sleep. What was the reason? Let's exclude crying babies and noisy neighbors upstairs having a party into the wee hours. Think back to the last time you couldn't sleep because something was on your mind. What was it? Anxiety? Fear? A guilty conscience? David had every reason to be sleepless through the hours of the night up on the Mount of Olives when his life was shattered in pieces. To be experiencing the same anxiety and fear, and guilt...tossing and turning.

And yet, somehow he slept soundly. You say, "He did? How do you know that?" Because he wrote a Psalm about these very chapters we've just studied. **Psalm 3. LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! 2 Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him."**

And yet- **v.5-6 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side.**

What is the secret? **v.3 You, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the one who lifts my head high.**

Tim Chester in his commentary on this psalm says it like this- *Normally a king's shield is his army, but most of David's army has deserted him. A king's glory is his palace, his court, his robes. David has left his place and put on clothes of mourning. A king is lifted up on a throne. But David is a long way away from his throne. David sleeps well because God himself is his shield and*

*glory. In one sense David leaves Jerusalem with nothing but in fact, David leaves Jerusalem with everything for he has God.*¹

That's the secret David had to relearn through brokenness. See brokenness is finally coming to the end of our feeble attempts to control our lives and outcomes, to manipulate others, to get everything we want, to avoid pain, to keep the tower from collapsing. It's coming to the end of life without God as our only shield, glory and lifter of our heads— and it's the same critical lesson for us. Brokenness isn't bad and it isn't the end. It can become the beginning: the beginning of humility and repentance, the beginning of letting go of control and striving, the beginning of surrender to the will of God, and the beginning of experiencing His presence in a new way. Because even if you have nothing, you have everything—if you have God.

Like David, some of us are living with the consequences of our sin or past choices. A broken marriage. A strained relationship with a son or daughter. A body damaged by addiction. A job lost through bad decisions. But others of us are suffering not because of something we did wrong, but simply because we live in a broken world where sin and tragedy touch everything. Either way, our shattered lives are not the end of the story.

And that's not just wishful thinking, the sun will come up tomorrow, or “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” optimism. Christianity roots its hope in a real event in history. Another King—Jesus—walked barefoot, weeping, rejected, outside the city, up another hill. But unlike David, He wasn't carrying His own sin; He was carrying ours. On the cross, He bore the full weight of our rebellion, taking the ultimate penalty we deserved.

And here's what that means: just as David trusted that God was still his shield, his glory, and the lifter of his head, even in his darkest hour, we too can rest in those same promises through Jesus Christ. Yes, our sins still have consequences—broken bones and black eyes still hurt—but Jesus has taken away sin's ultimate penalty. He has stripped it of its power to condemn. Now, even our pain becomes part of His redemptive plan.

So whatever you've lost, whatever shame or consequence you carry, you can still rest. God is at work—even here, even now. Because even if you have nothing, you have everything—if you have God.

There's a beautiful and ancient form of Japanese pottery called Kintsugi meaning “golden joinery.” The Kintsugi-shi, the Master Potter, takes broken and discarded pottery and with a special lacquer mixed with powdered gold, he carefully and purposefully restores the pottery piece by piece.  Instead of hiding the cracks, Kintsugi *highlights* them — the restored vessel becomes more beautiful and valuable *because* of its brokenness, not in spite of it. Every fracture line is filled with gleaming gold, telling the story of what it's been through. In Kintsugi, the break is not erased — it's redeemed.

¹ Tim Chester, *2 Samuel for You*, 120-121

Kintsugi gives us a glimpse of what God does through the gospel. Jesus doesn't discard the shattered pieces of our lives; and say we are finished, we are hopeless. He gathers them. He takes the brokenness and fuses it back together with His mercy — not with gold, but with *His own blood*. Far more beautiful and valuable not in spite of but because of our brokenness.

But in Christ, those very cracks become places where grace shines through — reminders of what we were and what He's made us. The gospel says: *You are not ruined beyond repair. You are remade for glory.*

Here's where it starts- Psalm 51:17 *The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.*

Lead in prayer.