

2 Samuel 15:1-16:14 | “Unshakable Faith in Uncertain Times”

Preached on October 30, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to 2 Samuel 15, as today we will be working through chapter 15 and half of chapter 16. *[pause]*

John Allen Paulos once wrote that, “Uncertainty is the only certainty there is.”

While that may *not* be the only certain thing in life, it’s definitely true that uncertainty is prevalent in our lives. *[pause]*

Just recently, my wife and I faced the uncertainty of what was going on with Kate’s pregnancy.

The doctors felt like she had hypertension, but then we were wondering if it was just stress-induced because she was really stressed the morning that they took her blood pressure.

So we didn’t know what they would do if at her next appointment it was back to normal, for they had planned to induce her 3 weeks early. *[pause]*

We were wondering: is this baby going to come now, or will we still have to wait 3 weeks?

Do we need to make plans; do we need to wait and see?

Would we be just living in limbo, not knowing *when* she would be induced, if at all?

There was all this uncertainty of what would happen and when. *[pauseeee]*

In the past couple of years, our world has faced uncertainty on a massive scale with the pandemic, economic instability, wars, and other factors.

In fact, a study from before the pandemic showed that the average share of adults experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorders was only at about 11%.

But in the midst of the pandemic in January 2021, the percentage of adults experiencing anxiety or depressive disorders rose to 41%.¹ *[pauseeee]*

There’s no getting around the fact that we face uncertainty in life and that uncertainty can really impact us.

So how are we to respond to and cope with uncertainty?

When everything feels out of control and you have no idea what the future holds, you need something lasting and solid.

And today we will learn about what that is, as we see how David faced uncertainty. *[pauseeee]*

¹<https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>.

Considering our story this morning, we remember what has led up to it...

David's son Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar, and then in revenge, Absalom, his brother, killed him.

So Absalom ran away because he knew he deserved punishment for his crime.

And then finally and reluctantly, Absalom was allowed back into Jerusalem and into David's presence. *[pause]*

But now what?

Is the relationship between David and Absalom truly reconciled?

What will Absalom do now that he is allowed back into the favor of the court?

Let's find out, beginning in verse 1. *[read 15:1-6]*

Absalom gets chariots, horses, and men to run before him.

Now to us, we might not truly understand what that signifies.

Well chariots and horses were like the luxury transportation of the day, and were like the best military weapon of the day.

And men running before him not only gave him 50 bodyguards, but would signal to others his importance and grandeur.

It's like, who could *not* look when he enters the town with such an entourage? *[pauseeee]*

If you think about it, Absalom was crafting his public image.

He was trying to morph peoples' thoughts about him to what he wanted them to think. *[pause]*

People do this even today.

If someone wants others to perceive them as rich and powerful, they will wear expensive clothing and drive expensive cars.

So also, by showing off his chariots, horses, and runners - Absalom was trying to communicate, "Hey, look at me: I am a rich, powerful, kingly figure." *[pauseeeee]*

Not only does he craft his public image with his chariots, but also, by how he interacts with others...

He would rise early, stand at the gate, and talk to the common person as they went to bring their disputes to David.

He would explain that the current setup wasn't efficient, and provided himself as the solution.
[pause]

You see, Absalom was a politician.

He knew how to appear and what to say.

He not only created an image of grandeur and power, but also made it look like he's a people's leader, who cares.

He's like, "This government is so inefficient and unjust, but *I* can provide efficiency and justice!
I truly care about you!"

And everyone wants to go to Absalom because he will listen, and he will always tell you that you're right. *[pause]*

He would even take a hold of each person and kiss them, acting like he valued the everyday person.

Talk about the quintessential politician!

He crafts his public image, acts like he cares for the common person, says what you want to hear, and persuades you to think that he is the solution to the current government's issues...

...And it works, because for four years he has done this, and he steals away the hearts of the people. *[pausee]*

Absalom knew how to capture the popular vote.

He deceived the people because our world values people who are physically attractive, rich, powerful, and charming.

He knew just the right strings to pull to draw the people in and capture their affections.

So he deceived the people into thinking he was this amazing leader, and he even deceives David in the next section. *[pause]*

He goes to David and claims that he must fulfill a vow in Hebron, acting like this spiritual person.

But what we find is that he uses religion as a cover for gaining a political advantage.

This is kind of like modern-day politicians, who will say they are religious in order to gain political points. *[pauseee]*

Absalom uses this visit to Hebron as a way to finally get everyone behind him as king.

He sends messengers through the land to tell people to announce that he is king when they hear the trumpet blast.

And he even invites 200 unsuspecting men to come to make it look like they are behind him, but really, they had no idea what he was about to do. *[pause]*

He used them as political props.

Sounds like current day politics, doesn't it? *[pause]*

He even gets David's counselor, Ahithophel, to join his side, and now the stage is set for a usurping of David's kingship.

In fact, just listen to what happens next in verses 13-14. *[read 15:13-14]*

David has to flee because he is unprepared to face Absalom at this point, so he decides to leave, regroup, and then plan what to do next. *[pauseeee]*

Stopping there in the story, we see that...

I. We sometimes face uncertain times.

For David, his uncertain time started when he had to flee the city, as he was on the run again, just like the days of Saul. *[pause]*

No longer was his throne secure, as in previous days.

No longer was he in the security and comfort of Jerusalem.

He wasn't the beloved, undisputed king anymore, but there was someone else who had the people's hearts.

All the security and familiarity of the past were gone.

He had no idea who would join him or turn against him, and there was great weeping and sorrow.

What lay ahead for him? He had no idea.

And so as he left the city, he was walking into the unknown. *[pauseeeee]*

Now none of us has had to flee a city because a rival leader is trying to usurp our place, but each of us have had to walk into the unknown. *[pause]*

We had to face COVID and all of the uncertainty that that brought.

We didn't know what would happen, what would change next, or what the country would look like post-COVID.

And we *still* don't know what will happen. *[pause]*

What about our political landscape in America?

We have felt the uncertainty and ups and downs of it all as chaotic election cycles have come and gone, and we even have one going on now.

And so maybe you are thinking, “What if *that* person gets into office? Then what?” *[pauseeee]*

How about you personally?

Haven’t you faced some uncertainty? Haven’t you ever walked into the unknown?

Have there been times of not knowing if you would have enough money to pay the bills?

What about the uncertainty of not knowing if you would have a job?

What about the mystery of not knowing what your physical ailment is?

The unknown of whether you would get sick or not? Or wondering if you would ever get better?
[pause]

What about the uncertainty of what to do when you lost someone very close, who has been by your side for years upon years.

They were your prime supporter, and now they’re gone, so what now? *[pauseeee]*

Like David, we each face uncertain times as we walk into the unknown, and so the question is: what stabilizes us in shaky circumstances?

As we look at David, we see that...

II. The Lord is our unshakable foundation and hope.

One time, either my wife or I put a glass bottle on top of the fridge.

Well as you know, when you open and close a refrigerator, it shakes a little bit. *[pause]*

For a time, nothing happened.

But then the day came when the shaking was just too much and the bottle hit the ground, broke into pieces, and liquid went everywhere.

It wasn’t fun to clean up. *[pause]*

Why did the bottle fall off?

Because with all the shaking of the fridge, it needed to be on a solid foundation or at least anchored to something. *[pause]*

So also, uncertainty can shake our lives considerably, but are we standing on a firm foundation that can't be shaken?

What we see with David is he has a firm foundation: the Lord.

You see this in how he treats others and talks about different situations that he encounters. *[pauseeee]*

The first time that we see his trust in the Lord is when he is on his way out of the city, and he notices someone surprising who joins him...Look at verses 19-21. *[read 15:19-21]*

Here was this Philistine, who appears to have joined David not too long ago, probably as a mercenary.

And David tells him to return, for he would be better off staying behind. *[pauseeee]*

Just think about David's actions here.

David was in this uncertain situation, and in uncertain situations it's easy to focus on self rather than others.

We become focused on our own needs, our own security, our own comfort.

But in David's trial, he's thinking of another person, so much so that he's willing to have less security, if it helps someone else. *[pause]*

It's not like David had a crazy big army, so out of fear David could have just expected and forced Ittai to stay with him, but in sacrificial love, he wanted the best for him. *[pauseeee]*

You see, trusting the Lord frees us up to love others sacrificially.

This is because you are secure in the Lord, and so you don't need to keep garnering more and more security in other places. *[pauseeee]*

Think with me about money.

When you don't feel like you have enough money, you tend to keep it all for yourself, right?

Well think of how trusting the Lord's provision would free you up to love sacrificially...

If you were secure in knowing that the Lord will provide for your needs, you would be freed up to give sacrificially to someone else in need.

That's the impact that trust in the Lord can make: it frees us up to love others. *[pauseeee]*

Maybe one reason that you don't love others sacrificially is because you are focused solely on what you are facing.

But like David: look up to the Lord, and once you look up, you can look out rather than in.
[pauseeee]

So Ittai joins David, but then there are some others and some *thing* that is brought to join him in verses 24-26...*[read 15:24-26]*

Thankfully, David has the priests on his side, and they bring the Ark of the Covenant with them.

But little did they know that David's mindset is in "fully-trusting mode". *[pause]*

He knows that he doesn't need the Ark with him, for it's not some special talisman like Israel thought back in 1 Samuel 4.²

And so he doesn't try to use the Ark to sort of twist God's arm to help him, but rather, he knows that God will do what He deems best.

And he even sends the top priests, Zadok and Abiathar, back as his informants. *[pauseeee]*

You see, David shows us that trusting in the Lord's control leads us to submit to His will.
[pauseeee]

If God chooses, David will see the Ark again.

If God doesn't choose that, then David is ready for God to do what seems best.

Either way, David left his future entirely in the Lord's hands. *[pause]*

Talk about a disposition of trust!

He didn't need to manipulate the situation, but he knew he needed to simply trust God's will.
[pauseeee]

How often we try to take control, and manipulate situations in our favor out of fear.

How often we follow our own will, instead of submitting to His.

But trusting the Lord leads to submitting to the Lord.

He can be trusted to do what He deems best, and what He deems best is always truly best.
[pauseeee]

Trust the Lord's will and goodness!

Don't try to control everything, but lay your life at His feet in submission.

In your health situations say, "If the Lord wants to, He will heal me, but if He doesn't, then let Him do what He deems best."

² See 1 Samuel 4:1-11.

In your financial situations, lay them at His feet.

In all of your uncertainty, submit it all to the certain God. *[pauseeeee]*

To act this way, like David, you need to have a robust view of God that doesn't think He's out to get you and make you miserable, but who is out to always do what is eternally good. *[pauseeee]*

Next, David goes up the Mount of Olives weeping.

And you know how it's often how you hear bad news on top of bad news?

Well that's what happens with David, as he hears that his counselor, Ahithophel, has joined Absalom. *[pause]*

Imagine that.

Your top counselor - who later on, we are told his counsel is so good that it was as if one had consulted the Word of God³ - has joined the enemy side.

That's hard to take, and so in desperation, David prays to God to thwart Ahithophel's counsel.

And look at what happens in verse 32...*[read 15:32-34]*

David received an answer to his prayer!

He had just prayed for Ahithophel's counsel to be thwarted, and look who shows up, none other than Hushai the Archite. *[pause]*

Hushai is called David's friend, and seems to be a close advisor, for he is told by David to go back to Jerusalem in order to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. *[pauseeee]*

As we evaluate what's going on here, we see that trusting the Lord's control does not mean we do nothing. *[pause]*

Sometimes people believe that if you believe in the sovereignty of God, then just sit back and do nothing.

But that's not how it works.

Instead, David knew that God's providential working sometimes works *through* human means. *[pause]*

David trusted God greatly, yet throughout this chapter, he is using his God-given wisdom to strategically place people in positions to know what's going on with Absalom.

³ See 2 Samuel 16:23.

So even though he trusted in the sovereignty of God, he still prayed and sent Hushai on a mission. *[pauseeee]*

Sharing the Gospel is a good example of this truth.

We know that we are called to share the Gospel with others, but God ultimately has to be the One to do the work in their hearts.

And so He uses our Gospel-sharing in His providence to save souls.⁴ *[pauseeeee]*

As you can see, trust in God's control doesn't mean we do nothing, but rather, we know that He uses our obedient, wise actions in His providential working.

So don't sit back and do nothing, but trust Him, use wisdom, and obey. *[pauseeeee]*

As you enter chapter 16, you notice that David once again meets someone else on his way out of town.

This time it's someone named Ziba, who we were introduced to in a previous chapter...

Ziba is the prior servant of Saul, who was appointed as the servant of Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, to take care of him and his estate.⁵ *[pause]*

Look there at 2 Samuel 16:1. *[read 16:1]*

Wow, what care of God!

Here is David walking into the unknown, yet God provides food, drink, and donkeys for him. *[pause]*

God was showing him that He would provide for his needs, even in the wilderness.

So also, in all of your uncertainty, God will provide for your needs, so trust Him!

It may be in unique ways and at unexpected times, but God will provide. *[pauseeeee]*

Even amidst all of the bad news of what was happening, God was still caring for David.

He even hears from Ziba that Mephibosheth has turned against him, hoping that this situation helps him to gain back the kingdom of Saul.

And later on, we find that Ziba is probably lying about this, for Mephibosheth gives a different story,⁶ but either way - God was providing for David. *[pauseeeee]*

⁴ Nehemiah 4:9 is also a good example of this, as it says, "And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night."

⁵ See 2 Samuel 9.

⁶ See 2 Samuel 19:24-30.

I don't know how and when God will provide for you, but trust that He will!

He cares for us, and gives us what we need as we follow Him!⁷ *[pauseeee]*

Moving on, we see David encounter one more person, and this isn't the most pleasant encounter, either.

A man named Shimei (from the family of Saul) comes out, throws rocks at David and his people, and curses continually. *[pause]*

He claims that what David was facing was God paying him back for what he did to the house of Saul.

He even calls David a man of blood and worthless. *[pause]*

Talk about being pelted with harsh words and stones!

And all of us are thinking exactly what Abishai is thinking, "Take him out!" But how does David respond to Shimei?

Verses 10-12...*[read 16:10-12]*

Talk about restraint!

I think any of us in David's position, having the power that he did, would do anything to get rid of this cursing, rock-throwing pest.

Yet David's trust in the Lord shines once again. *[pause]*

He essentially says, "What if God is behind this?"

"If God's behind this, who am I to say anything? Who am I to question God Almighty's ways?" *[pause]*

You see, David trusted the Lord's control so much that it meant that he knew that even hard times were used by God for good.

He knew that no situation was outside of His control, even the bad ones. *[pause]*

He was thinking, "If God has a purpose in Shimei's cursing, then why avoid it?"

"Maybe God wants me to face this and learn from this?" *[pauseeee]*

What a difference trust in the Lord makes!

What if we each had that mindset to whatever trial we faced?

⁷ See Matthew 6:25-33.

What if we thought, “You know, maybe God has a purpose for allowing me to go through this?”
[pause]

Like David, we don’t always know what the purpose is, but we can rest in God’s goodness.

Like David, it’s not always the most pleasant experience for us, but it’s worth it in the end.
[pauseeee]

We are often like Abishai, ready to cut off the head of the situation that we are facing, but may we be like David, always prone to trust the good God, even in hard situations. *[pauseeee]*

You see, David knew the character of God, and that God would vindicate him and make things right in the end.

He trusted God for the future, and you know what?

God did vindicate and deal with Shimei when Solomon took over.⁸ *[pauseeee]*

You can endure hardship and even not retaliate when people do you wrong because you have a God, who will always do what’s good and just.

You can endure insults, like Christ, who “when he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”⁹
[pauseeee]

Imagine what a difference it would make in your life, if you looked at your trials in this way?

What if we said like Joseph, “you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.”¹⁰ *[pause]*

What a difference trust in the Lord makes in uncertain times!

He even refreshes us amidst our hard times like verse 14 says, “And the king, and all the people who were with him, arrived weary at the Jordan. And there he refreshed himself.” *[pause]*

He will provide refreshment when we need it in His providential care, so continue trusting Him!...

Trust the Lord in the unknown!

We all face uncertain times in our lives, but the Lord is our unshakable foundation and hope.
[pause]

Imagine if you were armed with this kind of trust in the Lord as you face future, uncertain situations...

⁸ See 1 Kings 2:8-9, 36-46.

⁹ 1 Peter 2:23.

¹⁰ Genesis 50:20.

In those times where you have no idea how you will make it financially the next month...

...In utmost trust in the Lord, you can get out an envelope, put some money in it, and send it to a fellow church member in need because you trust that God will provide for your needs. *[pause]*

In those times when you are being ridiculed for your faith, ostracized, and figurative rocks are being thrown at you...

...You can cling to the Lord because you know that this isn't outside of His notice, and someday He will make all things right. *[pause]*

And on that day when you are staring at the casket of the person who brought stability to your life, and now they are gone, and you have no idea how you will make it...

...You can find refuge in the Lord, as you pray, "Lord, I submit my will to Yours, this is hard, but You are my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer."¹¹ *[pauseeee]*

No matter what comes our way, we have a solid foundation and a sure hope.

And we have that solid foundation and hope because God the Father sent Jesus Christ to this earth to die for our sins and rise again.

He has secured for us forgiveness and eternal life, so that no matter what happens to us in this earthly life, we have an anchor that holds. *[pause]*

Jesus Christ is our righteousness - He has taken our sin upon Himself and His righteousness was imputed to our account.

We stand faultless before the throne, and Satan nor death has the final word on our lives. *[pause]*

As that great hymn says, "The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes;

That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"¹²

¹¹ See Psalm 18:2.

¹² "How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord." Written by "K" in Rippon's Selection of Hymns, 1787.