

The Power of a Praying Mother

Text: 1 Samuel 1:1-28

Introduction:

1. Context: 1 Samuel continues the record of the period of the Judges. Samuel was the last judge and during his lifetime the nation transitioned to the monarchy. John Butler writes, “It was towards the end of the last century of the four centuries of the judges in Israel.”
2. The nation was at a low spiritual ebb at this time. Idolatry was rampant, God was largely silent (1 Sam. 3:1) and even the temple which was meant to be the spiritual worship centre of Israel was in disrepute due to the wicked and immoral activities of Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas.
3. Against this bleak and black backdrop, the faith of godly Hannah would shine. There was still a godly remnant in Israel and God found a woman He could use to bring a man of God into the nation who would be a true spiritual giant; a man who would leave his mark on the nation and go down in the annals of Biblical history as one of the great men of faith. Butler writes, “The setting was dark and bleak before Samuel’s birth. But God often paints His most beautiful scenes on a canvas of life which has a dark background.”
4. The focus of this message will be upon Hannah as an example of a godly mother. We will see she was a woman of true spirituality – a woman of faith and prayer. All can learn from her godly example, men included.
5. We will survey and summarize the chapter under three headings.

Observe firstly...

I. HANNAH’S SORROW (Vs. 1-8)

We note two trials that form the backdrop to Hannah’s prayer. Hannah experienced:

A. The Sorry of Bigamy (Vs. 1-5a)

1. Jewish tradition states that Hannah was Elkanah’s first wife but that he eventually took Peninnah on account of Hannah’s barrenness. Whether this was the case or not, the Scriptures plainly highlight the pain that is associated with deviating from God’s design for marriage which is one man married to one woman for life.
2. The account exposes some of the sorrows of a polygamous marriage:
 - a. Favouritism (Vs. 4-5) – Elkanah loved Hannah more than Peninnah.
 - b. Antagonism (Vs. 6) – Peninnah tormented and provoked Hannah on account of her barrenness.

- c. Note: **Any** deviation from God's created order for marriage results in sorrow, heartache and damage.
- 3. The situation that existed in this home reminds us of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar.

B. The Sorry of Barrenness (Vs. 5b-8)

- 1. The Statement of her Barrenness (Vs. 2)
 - a. Vs. 2b states the sad reality in the words "and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children."
 - b. For a Jewish woman, barrenness was considered a great reproach. God created women with certain maternal attributes which naturally give them a desire for children.
- 2. The Source of her Barrenness (Vs. 5-6)
 - a. Twice it is stated that God had shut up her womb. Conception is viewed as a gift from God in Scripture and is not to be taken for granted.
 - i. Ruth 4:13 "So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, **the LORD gave her conception**, and she bare a son."
 - ii. Psalm 127:3-5 "Lo, children **are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward**. As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth. Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."
 - b. God had allowed this trial in Hannah's life, not because He is a cruel and capricious God, but because He was going to use this trial to accomplish a very special purpose in and through Hannah's life. This trial would bring Hannah to a place of total surrender which would make her a usable vessel for God to use to raise up a man of God in the nation.
- 3. The Suffering from her Barrenness (Vs. 6-8)
 - a. Provoked by Peninnah (Vs. 6-7)
 - i. "provoked her sore" (Vs. 6)
 - ii. "provoked her" (Vs. 7)
 - iii. The same Hebrew word is often translated "provoked to anger".
 - iv. For some, "Providence smiles on them, but it makes them frown on everyone else!" How you handle your blessings says something of your character.
 - b. Misunderstood by Elkanah (Vs. 8)

Observe secondly...

II. HANNAH'S SUPPLICATION (VS. 7-20)

We learn at least 7 truths about Hannah's prayer in these verses:

A. The Place of Her Prayer (Vs. 9)

1. The tabernacle was the place where God's presence was manifested. Hannah sought the presence of God in her trial. Prayer is always the right response to our trials.
2. In the N.T. era, we do not need to go to a physical temple but have direct access into the very presence of God (Heb. 4:16; 10:19).
3. Note: Access to God is on the basis of our relationship to Him. Hannah clearly had a personal relationship with God. God was her Father and so she could approach him. In her second recorded prayer she references the fact that she rejoiced "in thy salvation" (2:1). Have you experienced salvation?

B. The Passion of Her Prayer (Vs. 10)

1. She poured out her trial (Vs. 10a)
 - a. She was "in bitterness of soul". This gives us a window into just how grievous this burden was for dear Hannah. The years of barrenness and the heartless, cruel taunts of her adversary had taken their toll on her mind and emotions. She refers to it in Vs. 16 as "the abundance of my complaint and grief".
 - b. F.B. Meyer: "The grief of the childless wife drove Hannah to God. There she found her only resource. When the heart is nigh to breaking, what else can we do than pour out our complaint before the One who is ever ready to hear our cry? We may trust God with our secrets; He will keep sacred our confidence."
 - c. Psalm 62:8 "Trust in him at all times; ye people, **pour out your heart before him**: God *is* a refuge for us. Selah." The phrase "pour out" means to "spill forth" like a libation. Hannah released the dam of bitter sorrow in the presence of God.
2. She poured out her tears (Vs. 10b)
 - a. This was no shallow emotionalism. These were the tears of a fervent petition. James 5:16 "... The effectual **fervent prayer** of a righteous man availeth much."
 - b. Today, in our efforts to distance ourselves from some of the excesses of the Charismatic movement, we have gone to far the other way to where our prayers tend to be a cold, clinical, intellectual exercise. No wonder we see so few answers to prayer.
3. Illustration: Spurgeon's Ministry and Prayer
 - a. Spurgeon wrote the following in his autobiography: "When I came to New Park Street Chapel, it was but a mere handful of people to whom I first preached, yet I can never forget how earnestly they prayed. Sometimes they seemed to plead as though they could really see the Angel of the covenant present with them, and as if they must have a blessing from Him. More than once, we were

all so awe-struck with the solemnity of the meeting, that we sat silent for some moments while the Lord's power appeared to overshadow us; and all I could do on such occasions was to pronounce the Benediction, and say, "Dear friends, we have had the Spirit of God here very manifestly tonight; let us go home, and take care not to lose His gracious influences." Then down came the blessing; the house was filled with hearers, and many souls were saved. I always give all the glory to God, but I do not forget that He gave me the privilege of ministering from the first to a praying people. We had prayer-meetings in New Park Street that moved our very souls. Every man seemed like a crusader besieging the New Jerusalem, each on appeared determined to storm the Celestial City by the might of intercession, and soon the blessing came upon us in such abundance that we had not room to receive it."

- b. A.T. Pierson, who ministered at the Tabernacle during Spurgeon's last illness, said, "This Metropolitan Tabernacle is a house of prayer most emphatically ... prayer is almost ceaselessly going up. When one meeting is not in progress, another is. ... There are prayer meetings before preaching, and others after preaching. ... No marvel that Mr. Spurgeon's preaching has been so blessed. He himself attributes it mainly to the prevailing prayers of his people"

C. The Petition in Her Prayer (Vs. 11)

1. It was a humble petition – Hannah refers to herself three times as "thine handmaid". A 'handmaid' was a female servant or slave. This was not an arrogant demand but a humble appeal to her God.
2. It was a specific petition – Hannah brought a very specific request to the throne of God. F.B. Meyer "So many of our prayers miscarry because they are aimed at no special goal. We launch them aimlessly in the air, and wonder that they achieve nothing."
3. It was a consecrated petition – Hannah's prayed for a child, not for her, but for the Lord. She would totally surrender Him to God's service. Have you surrendered your children to God for whatever **His plan** is for their lives?

D. The Persistence of Her Prayer (Vs. 12)

1. "she continued praying before the LORD" = this was a protracted period of prayer. She would stay there until she prevailed. Do we ever linger in the presence of God or is it a quick routine for us?
2. Col. 4:2 "**Continue in prayer**, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;"
3. E.M. Bounds: "Without continuance the prayer may go unanswered. Importunity is made up of the ability to hold on, to press on, to wait with unrelaxed and unrelaxable grasp, restless desire and restful patience. Importunate prayer is not an incident, but the main thing, not a performance but a passion, not a need but a necessity. Prayer in its highest form and grandest success assumes the attitude of a wrestler with God. It is the contest, trial and victory of faith; **a victory not secured from an enemy, but from Him who tries our faith that He may enlarge it: that tests our strength to make us stronger**...There is neither encouragement nor room in Bible religion for feeble desires, listless efforts, lazy attitudes; all must be strenuous, urgent, ardent. Inflamed desires, impassions, unwearied insistence delight Heaven. God would have His children incorrigibly in earnest and persistently bold in their efforts...**Our whole being must be in our praying**; like

John Know, we must say and feel, "Give me Scotland, or I die." (Purpose in Prayer P. 46)

E. The Perception of Her Prayer (Vs. 12-17)

1. Sadly, Eli didn't recognize fervent prayer and wrongly assumed Hannah was drunk.
2. Remember! If you become a serious, fervent and godly woman of prayer you **WILL** be misunderstood and misrepresented at times by carnal believers.

F. The Peace after Her Prayer (Vs. 18)

1. Peace was the fruit of Hannah's praying. She had cast her burden on the Lord and now He would sustain her (Psalm 55:22).
2. She experienced the truth of Philippians 4:6-7 "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. **And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**"
1. Ecc. 7:3 "Sorrow *is* better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."
2. Hymn: "Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer."

G. The Performance of Her Prayer (Vs. 19-20)

1. God remembered Hannah (Vs. 19)
2. God answered Hannah (Vs. 20)
 - a. 'Samuel' = asked of God. The very name she chooses testifies to the fact he was given in answer to prayer.
 - b. Samuel was a product of his mother's prayers!

Observe thirdly...

III. HANNAH'S SURRENDER (VS. 21-28)

Hannah followed through on the commitment she made to God in prayer. There were several steps involved in this:

A. Hannah's Raising of Samuel (Vs. 21-23)

1. Hannah had a brief window of opportunity to prepare Samuel, like Jochebed of old.
2. Someone once said, "The hand that rocks the cradle rocks the world." (Poem by William Ross Wallace). Don't underestimate the impact of a godly mother on the formative years of a child.

B. Hannah's Release of Samuel (Vs. 24-28)

1. Hannah totally surrendered to God's will for Samuel.
 - a. Vs. 22 "...then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, **and there abide for ever.**"
 - b. Vs. 28 "...I have lent him to the LORD; **as long as he liveth...**". The word 'lent' means "to return that which has been obtained by

petition.” (Wilson) “This was not a loan to God that God was to give back to Hannah. It was Hannah giving back to God what God had already given her.” (Butler)

2. Elkanah surrendered to God’s will for Samuel (Vs. 23).
3. Challenge: As a parent, how do you view your children? Are you totally surrendered to God’s will for them? Have you placed them on the altar for God to take and use in whatever way He sees fit? So often parents are an obstruction to God’s will in the lives of their children because of self-centeredness.

C. Hannah’s Reward after Samuel (2:19-21)

1. God blessed Hannah with further contact with Samuel each year (Vs. 19). We get a window into the mother’s heart in this verse. She made him “a little coat” each year and brought it to him.
2. God blessed Hannah with five more children (Vs. 21)

Conclusion:

1. Do you know Christ as your Saviour? Will you receive Christ this Mother’s Day?
2. Are you a woman of prayer?
3. Have you surrendered your children to God’s will?