

'The Rise of the Kings Series'

Sermons in the Book of 1 Samuel

Message 2 - 'Trouble, Tears, and Total Peace' 1 Samuel 1:1 - 18



Psalm 113:9 states, *'He grants the barren woman a home, Like a joyful mother of children. Praise the LORD!'* As we begin to look at the narrative in 1 Samuel, we come to a very sad and distressed home situation, but also a difficult time on the national scale as well. In the period of the Judges, the Israelites were in a spiritual mess. They lacked consistent, wide-ranging godly leadership and as a result, the nation was in a very poor situation. God began to move in a wonderful way, and who would have thought it, but God begins to work a change by sending a baby. It is remarkable in the Scriptures that we see He often does this in the history of Israel. He will send Samuel to Hannah, but we are brought in at the very point when we see Hannah's grief. What is a marvellous truth is this, that in our total inability, God tends to make this His starting point to do His work. Our complete hopelessness and helplessness are no restraint on His work. It is often in these impossible circumstances that God shows His mighty hand. The opening of this wonderful book begins not with Samuel, but through the eyes of his mother Hannah, and it is an emotional beginning. So there are three aspects of this that I would like you to consider:

1. A Broken Home (v1-8) - We begin with a description of Hannah's home situation, and we are introduced to real characters, in a real place, with real history. Yet, the home we are introduced to is not united, it is broken, with broken relationships. In lots of ways one could say that Elkanah was a good and godly man, but there was one major problem, he was a polygamist. He had two wives. Hannah was his first wife, but it seems that when she proved to be barren, he married Peninnah to have a family. It is hard to understand why Elkanah did not wait on the Lord and trust Him to fulfil His purposes, but he was not the first to fall into this error. Now, as was the custom and necessary, each year, Elkanah would take his family to worship at Shiloh. (Exodus 23:14-19). As part of their worship, they would eat a meal together. This occasion should have been one of great joy, even for Hannah, and yet as we see, it was actually something that she dreaded. Every year, Peninnah used it as an opportunity to provoke Hannah, to highlight her issue, and even to ridicule her. How sad, that in what should have been a great opportunity to worship God, she dreaded the occasion because of how she would be treated.

Hannah means 'woman of grace'. When we read the account before us, it is very clear that Hannah did display much grace, especially as she dealt with her barrenness, and more importantly, dealt with Peninnah when she attacked her with cruel words. What I find remarkable about Hannah is this, that she only expressed her grief to the Lord, she didn't look to cause tension in the home by taking on Peninnah. Hannah's purpose was to glorify the Lord, and this lovely, godly woman, would be used of God to bring forth a remarkable son who would oversee a new era in God's sovereign plan of redemption. What an example Hannah is to us. How often are we caught moaning about our situation?

2. A Broken Heart (v9-18) - As the narrative continues Hannah's emotion and experience is revealed to us. Whilst there is the occasion of a festive meal, Hannah takes the opportunity to go and pray. She gave herself in prayer, and poured out her hearts desires before the only One who could hear them, but then do something about them. She prays with such intensity that she cannot speak. Psalm 6:8, *'For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.'* The Scriptures tell us that sometimes prayer can be constituted in the tears of His people. We make much of grand words, yet sometimes, the most effective prayer is the silence of a broken heart approaching the throne of grace. I want you to see the liberty that Hannah enjoys before Yahweh. Christian, you need to realise that the Lord allows us to pour out our heart before Him, our difficulties, our problems, He can handle your tears. From a position of great sorrow and suffering, she laid her soul bare before the Lord. It is so important to see the way that she approached the throne of grace. There are some who would have said to Hannah that she should just praise the Lord for her situation. We are meant to know grief, but what it should do is move us to cast ourselves on Him. She submitted herself in that she was willing to do whatever the Lord had for her.

Notice Eli's reaction of condemnation. Hannah's faith and desire to serve the Lord in a special way was such that she even refuted the accusations and criticisms of the high priest. There is a lesson here, especially for young people, as well as for all of us. When you give your best for the Lord, do not be surprised if you are criticised by people, who really should be encouraging you.

3. A Brilliant Hope (v17-18) - Stemming from her intercession before the Lord, and then the outward sign of the blessing, she was able to return to the feast with peace in her heart and joy displayed in her persona. The burden that had broken her heart had now been lifted by the grace and mercy of God, and now she rested in the sovereignty of God, and the fact that He is a God who keeps His promises. In that she found peace, knowing that God had heard the cries of her heart. Whatever the outcome was in the Lord's hand, but her burden had been lifted. Undoubtedly God had heard her prayer, would answer it according to His sovereign purposes, but certainly He assured her of His love for her.



Penzance Baptist Church

'Upholding the Ordinary Means of Grace'

Pastor Jonathan Stobbs