

A PROPHET'S MOTHER  
1 Samuel 1:1-2:11

Intro: There are several great principles which are evident in the story of surrounding the birth of Samuel.

The first is that God has purposes in all that He does.

This is Mother's Day, and I suppose those in most of the nations of the earth, especially in the western world, mothers are being honored. And it is right that they should be. A commandment that we find in both of our testaments is,

Honour thy father **and thy mother:**

that thy days maybe long upon the land

which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Ex. 20:12).

Our mothers should not only be honored on Mother's Day, but every day in the year. We honor them with our love. We honor them with our help. But perhaps the greatest way that we can honor godly mothers is by living lives that please and glorify the Lord.

But <sup>a</sup>major mistake will be made in many pulpits today. When we say that we are to honor our mothers, we do not mean that we are to worship them. We worship God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have had a godly mother, a mother who loved the Lord, who taught you, who prayed for you, who led you by the example of her life, then you have one of the greatest of all reasons to give glory to God.

Hannah was a wonderful mother. She was an outstanding mother. She had Samuel for just a few years, but she left a mark for godliness upon Samuel's life that will never be erased. We could spend our time this morning thinking about how wonderful Hannah was (and it would all be true). But I am sure that that would make Hannah herself very unhappy. She would want us to praise God for His grace to her, and for His blessing upon her, in not only giving her a son, but for giving her a son like Samuel. He was to be a man greatly used of God.

So let us not be so occupied with Hannah that we forget Hannah's God! The story of the birth of Samuel is, above everything else, an account of the unfolding of the purposes of God.

The second thing which I want you to notice is in our greatest trials God works all things together for good, as we are told in Romans 8:28. Hannah had some very, very dark days before Samuel was conceived and born, but the outcome was far greater than anything that she had anticipated. We need to see and understand this.

The third thing that I want you to notice is that God worked in spite of the fact that He had to work through and for imperfect people. We will look this morning at Hannah herself, at Elkanah her husband, and at Eli the priest, her pastor. Look at any of these people and you will see that there was much to be desired in all of them.

I want you to make the application of these principles to your own life. God never works without some purpose, some good purpose, some eternal purpose. He never does anything needlessly. We would save ourselves a lot of trouble if we remember this. It may be dark all around you this morning, spiritually dark, emotionally dark. But you are waiting for the sun to rise. And it will arise. You may not be what you ought to be, but God does not wait for us to become perfect before He helps us. He meets us in our unbelief, sometimes in our rebellion, and works to improve us. What hope all of us should find in the story of Hannah, not just for those of you who are mothers, but for all of us. This was written

...for our learning,  
that we through patience  
and comfort of the scriptures  
might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

But now let us turn to the account regarding the birth of Samuel in the Bible, found in 1 Samuel 1.

The first thing that we see in this chapter is:

#### I. HANNAH'S GREAT DISTRESS (1 Samuel 1:18).

Spiritually conditions were not good in Israel at the time when Elkanah and Hannah lived. Hannah was a victim of a polygamous marriage. Her husband had another wife, and this was clearly a violation of the will of God for marriage. God never intended for a man to have more than one wife, nor for a wife to have more than one husband--as long as they both continued to live.

Adding to her distress was the fact that the other wife, Peninnah, had children, but Hannah was childless. Perhaps only a woman can fully appreciate how greatly this bothered Hannah. It probably would have bothered Hannah if she had been Elkanah's only wife, but it was complicated by the fact that Peninnah had children, but she was without a child. In Proverbs 30:15, 16 we read that among the things that are never satisfied is "the barren womb." It is the normal desire of every wife to have children.

But then this situation was made worse because of the way

that Peninnah treated her. Peninnah "provoked her sore, for to make her fret" (1 Sam 1:6). She delighted in holding this over Hannah's head. She purposely wanted to make Hannah as unhappy as she could. AND SHE SUCCEEDED! She wanted to make her "fret." She wanted to see Hannah cry. Peninnah was very wicked in what she did. This was a bad scene. Hannah got so distressed that she was not able to eat.

But I am not through with Hannah's troubles.

Elkanah, her husband, was no help to her. He did not understand what was going on in Hannah's heart. He tried to help by giving her more food, but that failed. He loved Hannah more than he did Peninnah (and probably both of his wives knew of his preference for Hannah), but that did not help. And the only thing that he said to her which are recorded in this chapter are the words found in verse 8. (Read.) Talk about pride; there it is! Spiritually Elkanah gave her no help.

There are two more logs to put on the fire that was tearing Hannah apart, and this next one was the worst.

It looked to Hannah as though the Lord's blessing was on Peninnah, and that it had been withdrawn from her. Psalm 127:3 tells us,

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord:  
and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

Those words had not yet been written, but Hannah knew the truth. She knew that the Lord is the one who gives babies to wives. That is why she prayed for the Lord to help her. But there was a long time in there when she had no evidence that the Lord was even concerned about her plight, and that is always hard to take. The Puritans spoke of such times as Hannah had as times of God's desertions--times when the Lord's back seems to be turned against us.

Let me mention one more problem that Hannah had: Her pastor, Eli the priest, did not understand. He thought she was drunk!

Let me say on his behalf that this probably indicates how greatly distressed Hannah was, but still she did not have the comfort of her priest.

Hannah was really alone! And yet she was not alone! Can you not see how the Lord had ordered her circumstances for His own glory, as well as for her good? He took every support she had away from her so that her only hope

was that the Lord would hear her. And this she did! And, although the Lord did not immediately speak to her, yet that was the beginning of the change.

And so let us turn now to:

## II. HANNAH'S GREAT JOY (1 Sam. 1:9-13, 19-23).

I have already mentioned that Hannah's troubles finally were used by the Lord to driver her to Himself. She prayed, but it certainly was not an ordinary, run-of-the-mill prayer. Do you see what was so unusual about her prayer?

She not only asked the Lord for a child, but she asked the Lord for a boy. And she promised the Lord that, if He would give her a son, she would give her son back to the Lord for the rest of his life, and He would be a Nazarite. See 1:11.

I seriously doubt if many women who were without a child would pray like this. This ought to tell us that God already had done a work of grace in Hannah's heart. She did not ask for a son just so she could have a child. She did not ask for a son so she could shut up Peninnah. SHE ASKED FOR A SON BECAUSE SHE TRULY WANTED TO GLORIFY THE LORD!

Did she know that the Lord was, in His dealings with her, making a provision to raise the level of spiritual life in Israel? I can't say for sure what she did know. But I know that no childless wife is going to make such a vow to the Lord unless the Lord had done a deep and wonderful work in her heart. The natural feeling would have been, "Lord, if you will give me a son, I will love him, and care for him, and never let him out of my sight!"

At this point the Lord did use Eli. Note what he said in verse 17. Hannah took this as an answer to prayer. Her tears were dried. She began to eat again. Her whole appearance underwent a change. She believed God.

What was the outcome?

"...the Lord remembered her" (1 Sam. 1:19b). What a precious expression that is. Do you remember that that is what was said about Abraham when the Lord spared Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? The Lord remembered him. Cf. Gen. 19:29.

This ought to encourage us to pray, and then to continue

to pray. Your problem probably isn't like Hannah's problem. And the answer to your need may not be as far-reaching as was the case with Hannah. But you have your problem to draw you to the Lord so that you will pray. If God does not give you exactly what you asked for, He will do something infinitely better.

Samuel, the name which Hannah gave to her son, was a lasting testimony as to where Samuel came from. It means asked of the Lord.

I do not have the time to deal in detail with the whole outcome as far as Hannah and Samuel were concerned, but let me just mention the more important parts.

And let us call this

### III. HANNAH'S GREAT JOY (1 Sam. 1:24-2:11).

In F. B. Meyer's book on Samuel he quoted these words from Robert Browning which he applied to Ruth:

Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered,  
Her feet were firmly planted on the Rock;  
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,  
Nor quails before the loudest thundershock.  
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,  
And cries "It shall be done" sometime, somewhere.

Historians tell us that in ancient Israel a child was weaned at approximately three years of age. You mothers think this morning of how you would react to giving your child to the Lord, your only child, when he was three years old, knowing that he would never live with you at home again!

Not only did she do it, but she turned that meeting with Eli, her pastor, into a worship service. There is no question about Hannah's love for Samuel. She loved Samuel as much as any of you mothers love your children. But she also loved the Lord. And without knowing the full significance of what she was doing, she was fitting right into God's plan for the blessing of all Israel in the way that Samuel would be used as a prophet of God.

Now let your eye run down through the first ten verses of chapter 2. This is Hannah's prayer, reminding us, as many have observed, of the virgin Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1.

I doubt if we can be as impressed by this prayer as we

would have been if we had lived at that period in Israel's history. One thing that probably was said over and over again was this: "Where did Hannah learn all of that truth?" There is no indication that Elkanah knew this truth. Eli was not talking like this. And Eli's adulterous sons had no idea that such truth existed. THIS IS TRUTH WHICH HANNAH LEARNED IN THE DEEP WATERS THROUGH WHICH SHE HAD PASSED!

Psalm 119:71 tells us,

It is good for me that I have been afflicted;  
that I might learn thy statutes.

Hannah could have said that, too. When we are afflicted, and all of our resources fail, we turn to the Lord and He begins to write the truth of the Word of God upon our heart. Our conception of the greatness, of the sovereignty, of the goodness, of the holiness of God, is greatly increased. Our faith is strengthened. Our love for the Lord increases, and we find a special joy in Him.

Even when we may not see the answer to our prayers, yet the Lord teaches us to find our joy, our contentment, our blessing, in being drawn to Him, and cast upon Him.

Concl: When Hannah stood before Eli as she brought Samuel to live with him in the Temple, she said, "I am the woman who stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord." She was right, and she was wrong. She was the same Hannah, and yet she was a different Hannah--a Hannah strengthened in her faith, a Hannah rejoicing in the Lord, a Hannah who was so occupied with the Lord that pleasing the Lord brought greater joy to her heart than even the son whom the Lord had given her. She knew that the Lord had plans for Samuel. She was willing to trust Samuel into Eli's hands because he was really in the Lord's hands.

1 Sam. 2:21 tells us the Lord gave Hannah five more children--three sons and two daughters. None could take Samuel's place, and yet they added to Hannah's joy of being a mother.

I trust that Hannah, by her devotion to the Lord, will be an example that all of us want to follow. But especially for those of you who are mothers, remember that the Lord has given you your children. The early years are the important years. Love them. Pray for them. Teach them. And live before them in the way you would like for them to live. The need has never been greater than it is today for mothers who know the Lord, love the Lord and their families, and whose chief priority to live to please the Lord. May God make all of us spiritually like Hannah became through her trials.