

Hannah - A Woman of Grace

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and guidance, if we could turn back to 1 Samuel chapter 1. 1 Samuel chapter 1, and if we take as our text the words of verse 19 and 20.
- 1 Samuel chapter 1 and verse 19. They arose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord. Then they went back to their house at Ramah.
- Delcanna knew his wife, and the Lord remembered her. And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel.
- For she said, I have asked for him from the Lord. And so on. And so this evening we're continuing our character study of some of the women in the Bible.
- And as we've progressed through the narrative of the Bible, we've encountered women from all different situations and backgrounds.
- [1 : 0 6] And what we've witnessed is the important role which they have all played in the story of redemption. Because just to recap, we started with Eve right at the beginning.
- Eve, the mother of all living. Then we met Sarah, who was Abraham's wife. The mother of the covenant promise. Then we looked at Rebecca, who was Isaac's willing wife.
- And then from there we moved into the book of Exodus. And we were introduced to Jochebed, who was the faithful mother of Moses. And we also met Miriam, who was the devoted daughter of Jochebed.
- And the sister of Moses. And then we continued through the story of redemption. And we met Rahab, the prostitute, in the book of Joshua. She was a woman who experienced the remarkable grace of God.
- And then we went on into the book of Judges. And we met a woman called Deborah. And we saw that she was a spiritual woman. Because she was known as a wise mother in Israel.
- [2 : 0 7] And then as the story of redemption has slowly unfolded, we met Naomi. Who was the mother-in-law to Ruth. And then we witnessed, as we saw last time in the book of Ruth.
- We saw how Naomi's providence brought Ruth to know the blessing of redeeming love. Redeeming love found in Boaz.
- I suppose you could say that's the story so far. The story of redemption which we have witnessed so far through the eyes of the daughters of the king. But as we step over the page now into 1 Samuel, we encounter a woman called Hannah.
- And now the first question which we ought to ask when we come to Hannah is, what is Hannah's connection to Ruth? Because when we seek to find out the connection between Hannah and Ruth, we understand why Hannah is appearing in the story.
- Because Hannah is introduced to us on the threshold of this new era. Different to the period of the Judges. Because up until this point, we've been going through the period of the Judges.

[3 : 19] And the children of Israel, they have been in the period of the Judges. They were in this repeated cycle of rebellion and restoration. Rebellion and restoration. And that's what we saw in the period of the Judges.

Where Judges came and Judges went. And as we know from the period of the Judges, we know that it was defined by the words, those closing words, In those days there was no king in Israel.

Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. So that was the book of Judges. And that was the same period which the love story of Ruth and Boaz was set.

And as the book of Ruth came to the conclusion, It came to the conclusion with the birth of Ruth's first child, Obed. And we're told in Ruth chapter 4, in the genealogy, It says, It says, Because with a king in Israel, Everyone can't do what is right in their own eyes.

but the story of 1 Samuel is taken up with the story of getting the right king for Israel because the people they want Saul as king but God has his chosen man God has selected a man after his own heart, David David the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz and so Samuel was this key figure in the transition from the period of the judges into the period of the kings in fact Samuel was going to be you could say the forerunner to David who would prepare the way for this coming king and of course you can see the similarities between Samuel and John the Baptist who was the forerunner to the greater than David, Jesus Christ but as the old saying goes behind every good man there is a good woman and in this case that good woman was Samuel's mother Hannah and although we don't have much in the way of a narrative about Hannah we can learn a lot from this woman and I'd like to draw your attention just to four events in this short narrative but each event seeks to highlight that Hannah was a woman who lived up to the meaning of her name because the name Hannah means grace and so we see four events in Hannah's life which highlight her gracious character four points

[6 : 20] Hannah provoked Hannah pleading Hannah patient Hannah praising Hannah provoked Hannah pleading Hannah patient Hannah praising Hannah provoked Hannah provoked just read again chapter 1 and verse 1 there was a certain man of Ramathim Zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jehoram son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuth and Ephrathite he had two wives the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Penina and Penina had children but Hannah had no children and so the story of Samuel begins with Samuel's father Elkanah now Elkanah was a Levite he was a man who loved God and he also loved his wives and his children he was a dutiful husband and a dutiful father but the root of Elkanah's domestic problems domestic problems it arose from the fact that he was a polygamist he had two wives and as we know polygamy was against what God had ordained because marriage it was ordained at creation by the creator it was to be between one man and one woman but polygamy was the outcome of repeated rebellion against the Lord during the period of the judges because during those years of rebellion and restoration there was intermarriage with other religions which insisted upon polygamy and that was the outcome the people of God had adopted the practice from other nations and made it the norm and it may have caused a little bit of a start at the beginning but after a while it soon became normal it became so normal that people forgot what God had actually said way back at the beginning in creation and they just got on with their lives and you know the same is true today with the redefinition of marriage and this massive push and encouragement for anyone who falls into the category of LGBT it's causing a bit of a start it's causing chaos the minority of society is redefining everything around us but unless the people of God stay sharp and stay focused upon the word of God we will become like the Israelites where all the changes in our nation today will become so normal that tomorrow we will forget what God said on the subject but the problem which plagued the nation of Israel wasn't the push for LGBT it was polygamy and polygamy was causing a rift in Elkanah's family between his wives and the rift as we read was because

Peninnah had children but Hannah had no children and when we read these words you would think that this clash of wives would come from Hannah because she was the one who couldn't have children you would think that she would be the jealous one wanting to cause a stir but she wasn't it was the reverse because the one who had children and the passage emphasises that Peninnah had lots of children and yet Peninnah was provoking Hannah who couldn't have children which makes her actions even worse because Peninnah you could say she had everything a woman could dream of now of course the inability to conceive it's a very sensitive issue not only in our generation but also in ancient Israel especially in ancient Israel because if you were a woman in Israel who was unable to conceive you were considered a failure and it was socially embarrassing for a husband to have a wife who was barren which is a horrible way and insensitive way to look at it but this was because children they played an important part in Israel's economic structure and children were the source of labour for a family and it was their duty to care for their parents in old age but what's more if a husband had a barren wife he was permitted under Israelite law to divorce her if he wished but what we see with Helkanah is that he remained committed to Hannah and that's what got to Peninnah

Peninnah had everything she had everything except the love and attention of her husband and we see that with the yearly offering which was made to the Lord at Shiloh you see that in verses 4 and 5 it says on the day when Helkanah sacrificed he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters but to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her though the Lord had closed her womb and it's those last words which always get me about Hannah the Lord had closed her womb and they're some of the hardest words to understand and they come with the loaded question well why?

why had the Lord closed her womb? and of course we can't answer that question some people think that the inability to conceive or illness or loss is a form of punishment from the Lord but that wasn't the case with Hannah and that's not how the Lord we have to see that that's not how the Lord deals with us because the Lord isn't this heavy handed father that's not the description which we're given of him in scripture he's described as a father who's full of pity and compassion and slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love which means that the things in our lives are not there to punish us their purpose as hard as it may be is to drive us to the Lord in prayer and dependence upon him and that's what we will see with Hannah in a moment but this problem of Hannah's barrenness it wasn't something new to the story of redemption because as we've witnessed we've witnessed all this before even in the life of Sarah who was Abraham's wife and also in Rebecca

Isaac's wife and it was Dale Ralph Davis who makes this comment he makes the comment on this passage he says barren women seem to be God's instruments in raising up key figures in the history of redemption whether it's the promised seed Isaac the father of Israel Jacob saviors or preservers of Israel Joseph Samson and Samuel or the forerunner of the great king John the Baptist Hannah shares in a fellowship of barrenness and it's frequently in this fellowship he says that new chapters in the Lord's history with his people begin God's tendency is to make our total inability his starting point our hopelessness he says and our helplessness are no barrier to his work and it's a wonderful thought isn't it to be reminded that with man it's impossible but with God all things are possible but the Lord's work not only began because of Hannah's barrenness it also began because of Hannah's distress because we're told in verses 6 and 7 her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her because the Lord had closed her womb so it went on year by year as often as she went up to the house of the Lord she used to provoke her therefore Hannah wept and would not eat and again we're told there that the Lord had closed

[14 : 23] Hannah's womb emphasizing the problem but if that wasn't enough Hannah and Penina Hannah had Penina irritating her and winding her up and bullying her year by year but Hannah's gracious character is highlighted in the fact that she didn't retaliate she didn't lash out she didn't hit back at Penina instead in her pain and misery she graciously turned the other cheek and she comes before the Lord pleading for things to change and this is what I'd like us to look secondly Hannah pleading Hannah pleading we've looked at Hannah provoked but secondly Hannah pleading Hannah pleading look at verse 8 and Elkanah her husband said to her Hannah why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad am I not more to you than ten sons after they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh Hannah rose now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord she was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly so during the sacrificial meal at Shiloh

Hannah couldn't eat she couldn't eat a thing she was miserable and you could say her tears were her food just like the psalmist in Psalm 42 when he said my tears have unto me been meat both in the night and day while unto me continually where is thy God they say and for Hannah it had all become too much for her the daily emotional strain of not being able to have children and then for it to be rubbed in her face continually by Elkanah's other wife Peninnah it was all too much and maybe what made matters worse is that when Elkanah tried to comfort his wife Hannah he was a poor comforter because he was only a bystander in her experience he couldn't enter into her experience he could maybe understand why she was upset and it was always what upset her but he couldn't relate to Hannah he couldn't understand

Hannah's emotional pain he couldn't empathise fully with Hannah he couldn't enter into her grief and sorrow but Hannah knew one who could which is why she leaves the dinner table and she goes to a quiet place to pray because to whom else could Hannah go but to the one who has eternal the words of eternal life and what we see is that Hannah's circumstances drove her to the Lord it drove her to her knees it drove her to the throne of grace it drove her to seek the presence of the Lord it drove her to plead for things to change in her life but what's remarkable about Hannah's prayer wasn't just what she said it was also the manner in which she prayed because we're told that she was in bitterness of soul and she was weeping in anguish which means that before Hannah even uttered a word the Lord was already listening she was already praying before she had said anything

Hannah's tears themselves constituted her prayer that's also what the psalmist says in Psalm 6 the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping and it's also what Paul said when he said that the spirit himself makes intercession with us or for us with groanings which cannot be uttered and my friends sometimes that's all we have in prayer we don't have words we don't have eloquence all we have is groaning and tears but what's so wonderful is that the Lord hears the Lord hears and the Lord listens to us and the Lord understands he understands the tears and that's what we see with Hannah because we're told in verse 13 that she spoke in her heart and only her lips moved but her voice was not heard it was a silent prayer expressed only through her tears but as we said it's not only the way

Hannah prayed which is remarkable it's also what she did say she did say something because in her plea to the Lord Hannah makes this promise and she says in verse 11 it says she vowed a vow and said O Lord of hosts if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant but will give to your servant a son then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life and no razor shall touch his head and what we can immediately draw from gracious Hannah's prayer is that she comes to the throne of grace acknowledging who her God is and who she is because she addresses God as the Lord of hosts the Lord of the armies of heaven and earth he's the sovereign king who has authority over every power but Hannah also acknowledges that she is his servant she is a servant of the king and as a servant of the king

[19 : 51] Hannah seeks to make a covenant with him and her covenant with the Lord is that if he will give her a son then she will give him back to the Lord and Hannah makes her covenant based on the Nazarite vow because she says no razor shall touch his head now the Nazarite vow which Hannah entered into it's there for us to read in Numbers chapter 6 and it states there that a man or a woman who takes the Nazarite vow will be separated and consecrated to the Lord they shall be holy and they're not to eat or drink anything from the vine whether alcoholic or not and they are not to cut their hair but what we ought to see with Hannah's vow is that her request isn't just for a son a son which she longed to have but her request is also for

Israel's salvation because Hannah's vow and Hannah's plea it's for a new Samson it's for a new Samson Samson was the last judge to deliver the people of Israel from the oppression of the Philistines he was the last judge in the book of Judges and he was called and consecrated by the Lord to be a judge when he was in the womb Samson was separated by the Nazarite vow from before his birth and that's what I believe Hannah is requesting here she's asking the Lord for a new Samson and in her anguish and her own personal pain and heartache Hannah is pleading for the Lord to give her a son who will redeem the Lord's people because when Hannah prays she says if you will look on the affliction of your servant and remember me the word affliction is the same word which was used to describe the children of Israel when they were in bondage in Egypt they were under the affliction of Egypt and the

Lord heard their cries and redeemed them out of slavery and that's what Hannah is praying for because she sees the bigger picture of the Lord's salvation she sees the bigger picture she sees the need for Israel's redemption because there is still no king in Israel and everyone is still doing what's right in their own eyes including Penina therefore Hannah's prayer isn't just for herself it's for others it's not selfish it's selfless it's full of grace because my friend Hannah's gracious character sees beyond her personal pain and circumstances and she sees the bigger picture she sees that God is in control and she sees that God needs to intervene and you know Hannah's plea here it's a lesson on how our prayers ought to be focused because we can often focus our prayers upon ourselves and our own needs ah don't get me wrong there's nothing wrong with praying for yourself and your immediate family and all these things and making personal petitions to the Lord that's what

Hannah does but in her plea she has an eye towards the Lord's sovereign purposes and his work of redemption and that's how we ought to pray that in every situation whether painful or joyful we should pray that the name of the Lord will be exalted in it that he will be glorified and that his kingdom will be extended through it but what we see here with Eli is that even the clergy get it wrong because believe it or not they aren't perfect Eli accuses Hannah of being drunk by the way she's sitting there silently mouthing her prayer but Hannah graciously assures Eli that she isn't intoxicated by the spirits of alcohol but she's sorrowful in her spirit and when Eli realises that Hannah has been pleading with the Lord and casting all her cares upon the

Lord he affirms to her that the Lord will answer her request and in verse 18 we see the contrast of Hannah's condition because before she brought her pleas to the Lord she was sick and unable to eat but after praying we're told that she went her way and ate and her face was no longer sad Hannah's circumstances had changed because she had pleaded with the Lord and she left it with the Lord and for us that's the hardest part about prayer whatever we're praying about it's not so bad pleading with the Lord but leaving things with the Lord and committing things to the Lord wholeheartedly that's what I find difficult that's what we find difficult but the reason for this is because we often lack patience we aren't willing to wait upon the Lord but Hannah was different

[25 : 12] Hannah was patient which is what we see thirdly we've looked at Hannah provoked Hannah pleading but thirdly Hannah patient Hannah patient look at verse 19 they rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord then they went back to their house at Ramah and Elkanah knew his wife and the Lord remembered her and in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son she called his name Samuel for she said I have asked for him from the Lord and so having pleaded with the Lord to answer her prayer at the temple in Shiloh Hannah goes home to wait upon the Lord in Ramah Hannah goes home to rest in the Lord's covenant with her and wait patiently upon him and as Hannah waited upon the Lord we're told at the end of verse 19 that the Lord remembered her the Lord remembered her and they're some of they're some of the most beautiful words in the Bible the Lord remembered her because they're not only an answer to

Hannah's prayer in verse 11 when she said if you will look on the affliction of your servant and remember me it's not only an answer to Hannah's prayer it's also God's assurance that he will fulfill his covenant obligation to her because the word remember it's a covenantal word and so what we're being told is that the Lord remembered his covenant with Hannah the Lord had made this covenant with Hannah and that if he granted her a son she would make him a Nazarite and dedicate him to the Lord therefore when the Lord remembered Hannah he was acting according to his covenant promise and that's what we see throughout scripture that when the Lord remembers his people he acts in accordance with his covenant of grace because after the flood when God destroyed the world through Noah we're told that God remembered

Noah when Abraham was pleading for Sodom to be spared from destruction we're told God remembered Abraham when Rachel the wife of Jacob when she couldn't have children we're told that God remembered Rachel and opened her womb in Psalm 98 that we were singing the Psalmist praised God for remembering his grace and truth to Israel's house and even the thief on the cross who turned to Jesus and said Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom and that's what we see here the Lord remembered Hannah and he acted according to his covenant of grace and as Hannah waited patiently upon the Lord we're told in verse 20 that it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore us on it came to pass in the process of time I just love those words because they remind us of the

Lord's sovereign hand in all things it came to pass it came to pass and you know the Bible says to us 396 times the words and it came to pass and it came to pass and it came to pass and every time I read them I always think that the Lord has given us these words to remind us that everything that comes into our experience it's only for a short time and all the things in our lives they come to pass whether it's sadness sorrow illness or pain or heartache or even people or ourselves our own experience we can see of everything we go through and of ourselves that it came to pass but what

Hannah teaches us is that when something comes and it comes to pass we need to wait patiently upon the Lord and trust his covenant promises to us and even Isaiah reminds us of that they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings as eagles they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint and it came to pass in the process of time Hannah conceived and bore a son she called his name Samuel for she said I have asked for him from the Lord so after patiently waiting Hannah received the child of promise and she named him Samuel a name which reflected her experience I have asked of him from the Lord or literally the name Samuel means named of God implying that Hannah named him before the Lord and asked for Samuel but by giving her firstborn son this name

[30 : 33] Hannah would be continually reminded that Samuel was only on loan to her that's what we read in verse 21 the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow but Hannah did not go up for she said to her husband as soon as the child is weaned I will bring him so that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there forever from the moment of his conception Hannah knew that the Lord had been faithful to his side of the covenant by graciously giving her a son but she also knew that she would have to do the same she would have to graciously give her son back to the Lord and that's what Hannah did because we're told in verse 24 when she had weaned him she took him up with her along with a three year old bull and a skin of wine and she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh and the child was young then they slaughtered the bull and they brought the child to Eli and she said oh my

Lord as you live my Lord I am the woman who was standing here in your presence praying to the Lord but notice what Hannah says she goes on to say in verse 27 for this child I prayed and the Lord granted me my petition that I made to him or which I samueled which I asked of him the Lord granted me my petition which I samueled therefore she says I have lent him to the Lord as long as he lives he is lent to the Lord and what can we say about this gracious woman except that she had a God centred perspective she considered her only son as a gift from the Lord but she also considered him as a worthy offering to the

Lord and that's how we ought to view our children and our grandchildren or our nieces or our nephews but not only the children that we're entrusted to entrusted to our care in our homes and our families also the children which have been entrusted to our care in our Sunday school our creche our youth fellowship our parent and toddler we need to commit them to the Lord because in the providence of God they have been graciously entrusted to our care and they have been given to us as precious gifts from the Lord and they're only on loan to us for a while but in that time we have to do what Hannah did we have to wean them we have to train them we have to invest in them as our covenant children and with our own children we have to uphold our side of our covenant and baptism we have to train them up in the way that they should go and when they're of age we need to give them back to the

Lord praying that he will use them for his glory and the extension of his kingdom in the next generation that's what Hannah did she said about Samuel as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord Hannah gave her son to the Lord and the Lord used him to perform the next stage in his plan of redemption and you know that's the last we hear of Hannah on the stage of history she appeared for a short time and yet her short time was key to the story of redemption because her gift of a son was to be used mightily by the Lord in finding King David the man after God's own heart and anointing him but what we are left with at the beginning of chapter 2 is Hannah praising gracious Hannah had been through so much and yet our lasting memory of her is one of praise and so we've looked at Hannah provoked

Hannah pleading Hannah patient and lastly and very briefly Hannah praising Hannah praising chapter 2 verse 1 Hannah prayed and said my heart rejoices in the Lord my strength is exalted in the Lord my mouth derides my enemies because I rejoice in your salvation there is none holy like the Lord there is none besides you there is no rock like our God Hannah's response to the events in her life are testimony to her love for the Lord and her faith in the Lord because in these words verses 1 to 10 we're not going to go through them this evening but in them Hannah reflects upon the gracious hand of the Lord in all her providences and in all her experiences and she says to the Lord she praises him and says my heart rejoices in the Lord Hannah rejoices knowing that his ways are not her ways and his thoughts are not her thoughts and his paths are not her paths and Hannah even acknowledges this in the way in which she concludes her praise because she says at the end of verse 10 he will give his strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed

[36 : 11] Hannah sees the bigger picture that all she went through in her life was for God's glory it was so that she would have a son who would find God's chosen king and anoint him but more than that Hannah saw herself as only a little link in the chain in this beautiful story of redemption she says he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his Christ his anointed his Christ my friend gracious Hannah came to know that her life it was all about exalting king Jesus that's why she praises him she praises him for being used for his glory when

John Calvin suffered the loss of his wife he wrote to his friend William Farrell and he said may the Lord Jesus support me under this heavy affliction which would certainly have overcome me had not he who raises up the prostrate strengthens the weak and refreshes the weary had not he stretched forth his hand from heaven to help me and that's what Hannah is saying here too in her song of praise I was ready to fall and the Lord gave me strength I was barren and the Lord made me fruitful I was poor and he made me rich I was sad and he made me rejoice I was broken and he blessed me my friend that's the testimony of Hannah and she leaves us as one who suffered much but looked to the

Lord in it and through it and she ought to be an encouragement for us to keep pressing on when we want to stand still she ought to be an encouragement to keep praising when the way seems hard she ought to be an encouragement to keep waiting when the way seems long to keep rejoicing when the burden seems heavy Hannah provoked Hannah pleading Hannah patient Hannah praising Hannah a woman of grace may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for those who appeared on the flow of redemptive history for only a short time and yet Lord thou art the one who used them mightily in thine own hand and O

Lord we pray that as those who are now in this period of redemptive history that thou wouldst use us although we may only appear for a short while use us we pray that we might be like Hannah to bring glory to thy name that we might O Lord be that link in the chain that draws a sinner from darkness to light that we O Lord would be used mightily by thee make us willing we pray make us like Jesus we ask that we would serve him that we would love him that we would follow him that we would give ourselves to him because he is the one who gave himself for us that he loved us and he gave himself for us O Lord bless us we ask protect us we pray bless thy word to us and keep us on the narrow path that leads to life for we know that few that be that find it encourage us and do us good than we ask go before us taking away our iniquity and receiving us graciously for Jesus sake

Amen We shall conclude by singing in Psalm 37 Psalm 37 Page 252 singing from verse 3 down to the verse marked 7 Psalm 37 from verse 3 Set thou thy trust upon the Lord and be thou doing good and so thou in the land shalt dwell and verily have food delight thyself in God he'll give thine heart's desire to thee thy way to God commit and trust it bring to pass shall he down to the verse marked 7 of Psalm 37 to God's praise to God's praise The light thyself

[42 : 01] In God he'll give Thine heart's desire to thee Thy way to God O may it entrust In reign to God shall he On my come to the light He shall thy righteousness display And he thy judgment Shall bring forth Like moon's eye all the day

Rest in the Lord Unpatiently Wait for him to not fret For him who prospered in his way Succeeded in sin doth get The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all Now and forevermore Amen And I