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1 SAMUEL 1:1-3:21

Today, we begin a very short study in the **Book of 1 Samuel**. The Pastor spent at least two years in this book, but we're going to be in it for only ten weeks...so we know before we start that we're only going to hit the very highest spots!!

The **Book of 1 Samuel** introduces us to several major Old Testament characters. In this book we'll meet **Hannah, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, and David**.

There are several predominant themes in this book. One is the **sovereignty of God**. One example of this is the birth of Samuel in response to Hannah's prayer. And, we'll see other examples of God's sovereignty as we go along in this book...especially at it relates to David.

By the way, what is the sovereignty of God? Ultimately, it means that God is in control of all things, although He may choose to allow certain events to happen according to natural laws...laws that He Himself has ordained...

Another theme in **1 Samuel** is the **work of the Holy Spirit** in empowering men for divinely appointed tasks. Another theme in **1 Samuel** is how **personal and national sin affects the lives of folks**...and we'll see much more of these things as we go along.

As **1 Samuel begins**, Israel was at a low point spiritually...The **priesthood** was corrupt. The **people** of Israel practiced idolatry. The **judges** of Israel were dishonest...**the nation of Israel was in a real mess**.

The first chapter of **1 Samuel** begins with the story of Hannah's longing for a child. Hannah was married to a man named Elkanah. Elkanah had two wives...one named Penninah, who had children, and the other named Hannah. The first chapter also tells us that year after year Hannah would go to the house of God with Elkanah and she would make sacrifices to God and pour her heart to God and beg Him to give her a child.

Elkanah loved Hannah more than he loved Penninah and I'm sure Penninah knew this. And since she did have children and Hannah didn't, **1 Samuel 1:7** says that Penninah would provoke Hannah so much that Hannah would weep and not be able to eat.

God didn't command a man to have two wives, but He *did* allow it. I don't imagine this ever worked out well, and it surely didn't work out in this case, did it? Can you imagine longing for a child and not being able to conceive and then having your husband's other wife holding this over your head because she *does* have children?

Well, today I want us to see how Hannah dealt with this...

1) **The Faithful Prayer of Hannah**

Verses 10-11...

Hannah promised God two specific things if He would allow her to have a son...

- 1) she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life...
- 2) she would make him a Nazirite unto God...

What Hannah is doing is **dedicating and separating** her yet unconceived son to the Lord's service all the days of his life.

This chapter also tells us so deep was Hannah's prayer that when the high priest, Eli, saw her praying, he thought she was drunk.

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Have you prayed for something for a long, long time? Have you ever wondered if God really hears? Are there times when you believe God has stopped listening? I believe most of us can say there have been and maybe are right now times when we've poured our hearts out to God over and over for months and even years on end and He hasn't given us the answer we want. I'm sure there were times when Hannah wondered if God **would** and even **could** give her a child.

Verse 20...

Well, God heard the faithful prayers of Hannah. God allowed Hannah to have a son. Hannah named this baby Samuel, which means "heard by God."

The psalmist said, **"Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."** That's what Hannah did! She continued to love God. She continued to trust God. She continued year after year to pour her heart out to God. She delighted herself in God and eventually He gave her the desires of her heart!!

I believe if Hannah were here today, she would tell us... "don't give up on God. If you know your request is in accordance with His will, and is not contrary to His Word, then keep asking..."

Jesus would later say, "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. For every-one who asks receives, and he who seeks, finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened."

The tenses of the verbs Jesus used here indicate an **ongoing, continuous action...** "Ask and keep on asking. Seek and keep on seeking. Knock and keep on knocking..."

I was in a Bible Study some years back and the study was written by a well-known preacher of our day. He wrote in one of our lessons something like this... "After you've prayed about a matter a couple of times, don't bring it up again, because it shows a lack of trust in God."

Well, I didn't believe that back then, and I don't believe that now. There are too many instances in Scripture where we are told to be persistent...

Remember the parable Jesus told about the widow who kept coming to the judge asking for legal protection...and he finally relented and gave her legal protection because of **her persistence...**

Remember the Gentile woman who came to Jesus and asked Him to heal her daughter of demon possession? Remember that Jesus said that it was not good to take the children's bread and feed it to the dogs, meaning it wasn't good to take what belonged to the Jews and give it to the Gentiles...because He had not been totally rejected by the Jewish people. However, this woman persisted and said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their master's table." And remember what happened then? Jesus healed this woman's daughter and He said He did it because of her **great faith!**

We're to ask and keep on asking, we're to seek and keep on seeking and we're to knock and keep on knocking. If you have an ongoing prayer request, let me encourage you to keep bringing it to God. The Holy Spirit will tell you when enough is enough!!! I believe instead of showing a *lack of faith...* it shows forth the *presence of faith!!*

Well, we've looked at **The Faithful Prayer of Hannah**, let's look at

3) The Fulfilled Vow of Hannah

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Verses 21-28...

Hannah didn't forget the vow she had made, did she?

You know, it's very, very easy to make bold promises to God in the midst of desperation and then not keep them when things are better, isn't it?

God tells us in His Word that it's better not to make a vow to God than to make one and not keep it!!

1 Samuel 2 begins with a beautiful prayer of praise and thanksgiving that Hannah prayed! Hannah prayed this prayer of praise after she had taken little Samuel to leave him with Eli...to be trained for the ministry.

How old was Samuel when he was left with Eli? We don't know... 1:28 indicates he was old enough to worship...

Weaning from the mother's breasts was commonly done at around three years of age in that culture, but the word "wean" isn't always used exclusively in connection with nursing a child. The word "wean" can also be used in connection with all the other things of early childhood. It may be that Samuel stayed with Hannah and Elkanah for four or five or six or seven more years of his life. (I'm not sure what Eli would have done with a toddler running around or even a four year old for that matter.)

By the way, this song or prayer of Hannah's is not a sad song...it's a song of gladness. **Hannah wasn't glad that she wouldn't be carrying little Samuel back home, but she was glad because God had given her a son to give back to Him.**

Hannah was simply being obedient to the Law of God. According to the Mosaic Law, every first-born of the children of Israel was to be consecrated to the Lord and then redeemed by the parents. Remember from last week what the word "redeemed" means? It means "to buy back". Well, Hannah consecrated...she dedicated...she gave to the Lord her first-born son just as she had been commanded...only she didn't buy him back. It was a permanent consecration and dedication and giving to the Lord, wasn't it?

Listen...you never lose that which you give to the Lord.

Those of us who have lost loved ones...husbands, children, mothers, fathers...what did I say? We've **"lost"** these loved ones? Well, if they were Christians, they're not really lost, are they? I mean, we know where they are, don't we? They're with Jesus!! And one day, we'll see them again!!

You never lose that which you've given to the Lord.

This precious mother didn't go to God's house merely to have a baby dedication, as we do here...she went to **leave** her child in God's house.

What an example Hannah is to us! Hannah was a woman of prayer...of commitment...of dedication... A woman who lifted her voice in praise and thanksgiving to God! A woman who knew that you never lose that which you've given to the Lord!!

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By the way...how do we give our children to the Lord today? I believe we consecrate and dedicate them to the Lord by living a godly life before them and by endeavoring in every way we can to making sure they come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's look at

4) The Faithlessness of Eli's Sons

Chapter 2 tells us that Eli's two sons were **sinful** men. This chapter tells us that they were **worthless** men...**useless** men...of **no value**. **Chapter 2** goes on to say they didn't even know the Lord. These were lost men! They were priests, but they were lost priests!

And these men were in disobedience to God in their role as priests!!

Back in **Leviticus**, God had given specific instructions about how priests were to be supported and fed. Priests didn't go out and raise cattle. Priests didn't go out and raise sheep. Priests had been appointed by God to do a specific spiritual task and they were to live by the offerings of the people.

Leviticus said when the people brought their sacrifices, the right breast and the right thigh of the animal to be sacrificed were to go to the priest. This was after the fat had been burned for the sacrifice unto the Lord.

But, the sons of Eli weren't satisfied with God's provision for them. They made up some rules of their own.

They decided they would take their portion **before** the fat was burned and their portion would be whatever a three-pronged fork would bring up. Now, the reason this was so wrong was that in taking more for themselves than God wanted for them they were stealing the offering of God and they were putting themselves above the worship and praise of God.

They were corrupting and polluting the system of worship that God had ordained!

Well, not only does **chapter 2** tell us these men were worthless, it also tells us they were immoral. They were being immoral with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. Can you imagine the example this was setting for the children of Israel?

Wouldn't you think these two men would have learned from what God did to the sons of Aaron when they offered "strange fire" on the altar? Remember God took **their** lives! You would think this would have given them a healthy fear of God and the duties He has called them to, wouldn't you?

Verses 22-25...

Why didn't Eli remove his sons from the office of priest?

Why did Eli give his sons a mere slap on the wrist?

Why did Eli allow them to lead the people astray?

Well, the fact is that Eli took the easy way out. It's hard to discipline children, isn't it? And the older they get, the harder it is!! And America is reaping the consequences of allowing children to grown undisciplined and having no respect for family or the law.

Right in the middle of all this is a beautiful little verse:

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Verse 26...God will use this little boy in a mighty way...because he is growing in stature and favor with God and with man. And it really doesn't make any difference if we grow in favor of man if we don't grow in favor with God, does it?

The rest of this chapter tells us that God sent a man to Eli to tell Eli that God would put an end to the worthlessness and the faithlessness and the uselessness and the immorality of his two sons. This man told Eli that God would take the lives of both his sons...**on the same day!** And He did...and we'll see that next week.

Well, we've seen **The Faithful Prayer of Hannah**
And we've seen **The Fulfilled Vow of Hannah**
And we've seen **The Faithlessness of Eli's Sons**

Let's look at

5) The Fervent Call of Samuel **3:1-9...**

This chapter marks a transition. The period of the judges would soon be over. Some of the judges were good, some were not so good. During the period of the judges, there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Samuel was the last judge of Israel...in fact, Samuel was called to fill many roles...He would serve not only as judge, but as priest, prophet and counselor. He was God's man at a turning point in the history of Israel. After Samuel, the office of "judge" would cease.

In the weeks ahead, we will see that it was Samuel who poured out the anointing oil on Saul and then, later on David.

Samuel was no longer a little child. The Jewish historian, Josephus, says he was twelve years old. He could have been even a little older than that.

Verse 1 tells us that word from the Lord was rare in those days and visions were infrequent. WHY? Well, everyone was doing what was right in his own eyes, weren't they? God doesn't speak to folks who are doing that! God speaks to folks whose hearts are tender toward Him, doesn't He?

Verse 7...

Samuel had been born to godly parents.
Samuel had been raised in the house of the Lord.
Samuel was even ministering in the house of the Lord.

But, Samuel didn't yet know the Lord. **What is the age of accountability?** Whatever it is, Samuel had reached it!! God is calling him and He is holding him responsible for responding to His call!

God called Samuel not once but four times... **Verses 4, 6, 8, and 11...**

Let me ask you a question... If Samuel had not responded to God for salvation and service, would God have called Samuel a 5th, 6th, 7th, or 15th time?

We don't know how many times God will call a person to Himself, but we do know this...

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God's Word tells us that His Spirit will not always strive with man.
God's Word tells us that if a man continues to harden his heart when he is often
reproved, then one day that man will be cut off without remedy.
God's Word tells us that today is the day of salvation, doesn't it?

Samuel was called four times...how many times did God call you? Is He still calling you? Today
is the day of salvation!!!

The story is told of Hermann Goering...Goering was the head of the German Luftwaffe...the
German Air Force under Adolf Hitler during WWII. After the war Goering was put in prison and
was tried and sentenced to be executed.

The prison chaplain had a long conversation with him and he emphasized the
necessity of preparing himself to meet God.

In the course of the conversation, Goering ridiculed certain Bible truths and refused to
accept the fact that Christ died for sinners. His was a conscious denial of the power of the blood.
"Death is death," was the substance of his last words. As the chaplain reminded him of
the hope of his little daughter meeting him in heaven, he replied, "She believes in her manner, I in
mine."

The chaplain was very discouraged when he left. Less than an hour later he heard that
Hermann Goering had committed suicide. God called this man, and he refused the call.

And the sad thing is that you and I could name others we know who refused God's call, couldn't
we?

Well, we know that Samuel finally recognized the call of God upon his life...let's see what that call
was...

Verses 10-14...

***Do you see what awesome thing God has done? He is establishing Samuel as Eli's
successor...Samuel will be the spiritual leader of the children of Israel!!***

Surely Samuel knew what Eli's sons had been doing, but do you believe this twelve or thirteen or
fourteen year old boy was really ready for this?

The Bible says "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

Eli's sons had sown iniquity and they would reap judgment.

They had sown disrespect for the things of God and they had sown corruption of the things of
God and now, they would reap judgment from God.

They had sown disobedience to their father and now they would reap the wrath of God.

Eli had sown complacency and compromise and now his sons were under a curse of their own
making. Could Eli have prevented this? We don't know! His sons made their own bad
choices...but we do know that God held Eli accountable at least to some extent.

And the saddest thing of all about this is that there was no room for remorse or atonement or
sacrifice for these sons of Eli. **And Samuel may not have been ready, humanly speaking, but
God would empower Samuel to do what lay ahead...**

Verses 15-18...

Samuel probably didn't close his eyes the rest of the night!

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He knew he must reveal to Eli what God had said to him...how he must have dreaded doing this!

But he did! He told Eli everything! And old Eli accepted the will of God, didn't he? Eli had served God long enough to know God's ways and will are perfect! ***"It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him."***

Verses 19-21...

We'll see Samuel a lot in the weeks ahead. I hope we get to know Samuel as well as got to know Paul.

Today, we've seen a loving mother as she gave her long-awaited son to God, and we saw how God gave her five more children!

Today, we've seen a passive father as he allowed his sons to bend and break God's rules and then this father heard how God would judge them for their sin.

Today, we've seen how two sons were brought up to be men of God and they became too familiar with the things of God. They never knew, loved or worshiped God. By the way, we need to remember that Satan delights in attacking God's children through **their** children!

Today, we saw the birth of a baby...we saw him as he was dedicated to God...we saw him as he took the things of God seriously...we saw how he came when God called and did what God commanded and how he grew and God was with Him as he grew.

We're going to be covering an enormous amount of Scripture every Sunday. Please study!! What a shame it would be if we don't learn the truths God has for us in **1 Samuel**.