

Hannah's Problem & Hannah's God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 May 2017

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] And take your Bibles and turn to 1 Samuel chapter 1. 1 Samuel chapter 1. We'll read the entire chapter. There was a certain man from Ramathim, a Zulfite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah, son of Jorhoram, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zulf, an Ephraimite.

He had two wives. One was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. Year after year, this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord.

Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah, he gave a double portion because he loved her and the Lord had closed her womb.

And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

Elkanah, her husband, would say to her, Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?

[1:28] Once, when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now, Eli, the priest, was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the Lord's temple. In bitterness of soul, Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord.

And she made a vow saying, Oh, Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me and not forget your servant, but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life.

And no razor will ever be used on his head. As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart and her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard.

Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine. Not so, my Lord, Hannah replied.

I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer. I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman. I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.

[2:35] Eli answered, Go in peace and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him. She said, May your servant find favor in your eyes. Then she went her way and ate something and her face was no longer downcast.

Early the next morning, they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Ocanah lay with Hannah, his wife, and the Lord remembered her.

So in the course of time, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, Because I asked the Lord for him.

When the man Ocana went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfill his vow, Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the Lord and he will live there always.

Do what seems best to you, Ocana, her husband told her. Stay here until you have weaned him. Only may the Lord make good his word. So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

[3 : 42] After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh.

When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli. And she said to him, As surely as you live, my Lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord.

I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.

And he worshipped the Lord there. Let's hear the preaching of God's word. If you've been a Christian for very long at all, you have discovered that living a problem-free life is not the Lord's aim for his children.

Not in this life. If it was his aim, you would have it. But it is his plan for his people for all eternity.

[4 : 49] But for now, the problems that we face in life are stages on which God is revealing himself as the great problem solver.

Why problems? To get our eyes on the great problem solver. They're his choice instruments to teach us to turn away from all other help to him.

To wait on him. To draw near to him. To trust and depend on him. And to set our hope on him. And it's in doing so that we learn more of him.

And we come to find him as a God of power. A God of faithfulness. And a God of infinite love.

So problems. They are God's tools. His instruments for the display of his own glory and for the good of his people. And here in the opening chapter of 1 Samuel, we have two big problems.

[5 : 51] And amazingly, the solution to the one problem turns out to be the answer to the other problem. First of all, let's look at Israel's problem.

Israel had a problem in that these were days of great spiritual decline. You can read it at the end of Judges, just a few pages back.

The very last words of the book say, In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did what was right in his own eyes.

That's the ethos, the spiritual climate of Israel as 1 Samuel dawns upon us. Everyone doing what's right in his own eyes.

And we find out in 1 Samuel chapter 1 that Eli is priest, but so is his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. And Eli's getting older, and he's not many years left and must soon be replaced.

[6 : 56] But his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, though they're both priests, they're not the kind of men that you want giving spiritual leadership to Israel. They were wicked men without regard for the Lord, without that fear that esteemed him.

And it was seen in the way that they treated the Lord's offerings with contempt, demanding the choice portions of all the offerings that were brought, choosing them for themselves.

And then sleeping with the women who were working at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And Eli's lame rebukes did nothing to bring his two sons into line.

And when the priests have no fear of God, it does not bode well for the people of Israel. Yes, they were doing what was right in their own eyes.

Israel needed godly spiritual leadership. That's the first problem that we meet in 1 Samuel. The other problem is not a national problem, but a domestic one.

[8:02] It's Hannah's problem. And so I'm preaching on Hannah this morning, especially for the encouragement of mothers. I doubt that any woman here would want to trade places with Hannah.

And yet her life is full of lessons. Yes, for mothers, but for every one of us. Hannah had a peck of problems.

It's hard to know where to begin. They all kind of center around her dominant problem of barrenness, as we'll see. But in the first place, we learn that she's married to a Levite who is a polygamist.

He has two wives. This again shows us every man doing what's right in his own eyes, showing us just how far Israel has strayed from the original design of the creator for marriage.

Of which Jesus would say, in the beginning it was not like this. It's supposed to be one man with one woman for a lifetime. And this departure from God's plan for marriage spells trouble.

[9:09] It's always been trouble. And this will be no exception here in Elkanah's home. Proverbs says, he who finds a wife finds a good thing.

But to take two wives is a bad thing. And that's the situation in which Hannah finds herself.

So her husband has another wife, Peninnah. But worse still, Peninnah has children. Lots of them. And Hannah has none. Oh no, we have seen this before.

And it goes nowhere good, does it? We have seen it with Jacob's two wives. Leah with her many children. And Rachel with none. But being the one who was loved more by Jacob.

Now it might be hard for us to identify with this problem of Hannah. But in that culture, it was a shame to be without children. There was a social stigma attached to it. Such that we're told in Luke chapter 1, when old baron Elizabeth finally got pregnant.

[10:20] She praised the Lord for having taken away her disgrace among the people. It was viewed in those days as the Lord's curse or disfavor. And indeed, in some cases, it was.

You remember Saul's wife, Michael, was struck with barrenness. Because of the way that she had no heart for the worship of God. As she saw her husband dancing before the ark.

Well, it was bad enough in Israel to be barren. And unable to produce offspring for her husband. But to have her overly fertile rival rub it in her face was more than she could bear.

And we can just hear Penina saying, Hannah, would you get some firewood for me that I might fix supper? My ankles are so swollen.

You know how it is when you're pregnant. Oh, I forgot. You don't know how it is, do you, Hannah? You've never been pregnant. She was an obnoxious thorn in Hannah's side.

[11:23] Just gouging her at every opportunity. Now, the interesting thing is that though Hannah had no children, she had Elkanah's heart.

He loved her. Loved her more than Penina. In fact, it seems he overcompensated, feeling sorry that she had no children. We read of him giving that double portion.

We'll see that in a moment of the meat. But that would have only made Penina all the more jealous of Hannah. Hannah. And so she would miss no opportunity to remind Hannah of her barrenness.

And we're told that this especially was the case whenever the family would go up in their annual journey to Shiloh, which was then the meeting place of God with his people.

And they would feast before the Lord. They'd all be gathered around a table as a family to eat the sacrifice before the Lord.

[12:26] And Elkanah would give portions of the meat to his wife Penina and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah, he gave a double portion because he loved her and the Lord had closed her womb.

And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. That's an insightful two verses, five and six.

Notice she's not even called Penina. She's called her rival. Hannah's rival. That gives you just a little bit of the flavor of the atmosphere in that home.

It was not only persistent. She kept provoking her. Continually at it. But it was also intentional.

It was meant to hurt. It was meant to irritate her. The theologian and commentator Dale Ralph Davis imagines the table conversation this way in Shiloh with Penina speaking.

[13:28] Now, do all you children have your food? Deary me, there are so many of you. It's it's hard to keep track of you all. Mommy, Miss Hannah doesn't have any children.

What did you say, dearie? Miss Hannah doesn't have any children. Oh, Miss Hannah. Yes, that's right. She doesn't have any children.

What? Doesn't she want children, mommy? Oh, yes, she wants children very, very much. Wouldn't you say so, Hannah? Doesn't daddy want Miss Hannah to have kids?

Oh, certainly he does. But Miss Hannah keeps disappointing him. She just can't have kids. Why not? Why? Because God won't let her.

Does God not like Miss Hannah? Well, I don't know. What do you think? And oh, by the way, Hannah, did I tell you I'm pregnant again?

[14:32] That gives us a picture of what it must have been like. She constantly kept up provoking her in order to irritate her. You'd almost want to stuff a big drumstick down her throat.

This woman who won't give it up and seems to have no greater pleasure than just seeing Hannah hurt. Now, any ladies wanting to trade places with Hannah yet?

She has one big problem. And we're told it went on like this year after year. Do you feel her pain? It's not only a big problem, it's a long problem.

It's year after year problem. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her until she wept and would not eat.

It seems with each verbal jab, Hannah's stomach would turn. And she'd lose her appetite for food until finally she would just break down and weep and refuse to eat altogether.

[15:37] So what was meant to be a happy feasting time as a family before the Lord would inevitably end up with one of the family in tears. Poor Hannah. It almost makes you not want to go up to the house of the Lord each year.

If this is the treatment waiting for you there. And yet she comes year after year. Because this was the place that God had set.

Where he had put his name. And he had set for his people to meet with him and to worship him. And that meant more to Hannah than the abuse that she must suffer there from her rival.

Ladies, learn from Hannah about the importance of public worship. She put up with much in order to come and worship the Lord.

Well, her loving husband didn't like to see Hannah so sad. So he tried to encourage her. And he would say, again, it sounds like this happened more than once. He would say to her on these occasions, Hannah, why are you weeping?

[16:42] I like his why questions. Why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons? I realize you want sons.

But you've got me. Men, this would not be one of the good examples to follow in husbanding. Elkanah is out to fix his wife.

But his efforts only made things worse. He seems unable to penetrate into her grief. Why is she weeping? Elkanah. Why do you even ask that question?

Don't I mean more to you than ten sons? Be careful, Hannah. Elkanah. You may not like the answer she'll give you to that question right now.

And so we would say with comforters like Elkanah, who needs enemies? So there's Hannah's problem. It's a big problem. She's been made barren by God. She's provoked to tears by her rival, Penina.

[17:51] And she's misunderstood by her husband. Notice twice we're told God had closed Hannah's womb. Things are repeated for emphasis.

Don't miss this, God is saying. Her problem was from God. And don't you miss that about your problem. It doesn't matter who the second causes are in your problems.

Trace them back. And the first cause of the problem in your life is God. And recognizing that is the first step in learning how to deal with your problem.

God exercises sovereignty over the womb and her barrenness as part of his plan. And Hannah's not the first nor the last barren woman mentioned in the Bible.

With this problem is she. Indeed, barren women were often used by God to raise up key figures in the unfolding of his plan of redemption for his people.

[18:57] So Sarah is barren. Abraham, the father of the Jews, has been promised descendants like the stars of the heavens.

And that one of his descendants would bring salvation to all the nations. But they're old now. And Sarah is barren.

Her womb is dead. And then Isaac is born of a dead womb. Rachel is barren.

And it ends with the birth of Joseph. Who was used to deliver the people of Egypt. The people of Israel from starvation and extinction.

It was from the barren womb of Manoah's wife that God brought forth a deliverer for Israel. Named Samson. And it was from that old barren Elizabeth that God brought forth a forerunner of his son, John the Baptist.

[20:02] Barrenness. Barrenness. Barrenness. It seems there's a pattern here. That when God's about to do some new thing for the deliverance of his people, he often uses a barren womb as his starting point.

Why so? Because few things reveal more clearly that salvation is of the Lord. If deliverance is to come to his people, it must come in a supernatural way. For what is more hopeless and impossible to man than bringing life out of a dead womb?

But God delights to show that what is impossible with man is possible with God. Amen. He doesn't need man's help. He doesn't need conditions to be favorable for him to work.

A dead womb will work just fine. In fact, it's his preferred way of working. He enjoys working after all hope of help is gone.

And then he steps onto the scene. When deliverance is seen to depend entirely upon him, impossible problems are a stage on which he reveals his glory.

[21 : 14] So, mothers, are you facing some problem that to you is impossible? A problem that's making you feel utterly weak and helpless?

Take heart. Your felt helplessness and not knowing what to do are often preludes to the Lord acting on behalf of the helpless.

Appearing in power for deliverance and help. It's his way. It was that way in our initial salvation, wasn't it?

Romans 5, 6. When we were without strength and helpless, he died for the ungodly.

Me being saved from hell without strength and helpless. And it was then that he died. Christ died for the ungodly me.

[22 : 18] He delights to come to the help of the helpless and do awesome things that we did not expect. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heaps. Hannah's God is your God, Mother.

Hannah's God is the same God that you pray to. Observe his works in history. Learn his ways. Draw encouragement from him. That in your darkest hour, you are just one moment away from deliverance by the almighty hand of the Lord.

Lord. Well, deliverance will come, but we're getting ahead of ourselves because Hannah's still chin deep in problems. And we want to look then at Hannah's response to her impossible problem.

We've seen the problem. Notice her response. First of all, we must say that we are impressed that she has not strangled Penina. We read of no revenge, no payback, no trash talking to her rival.

We're impressed that she hasn't let this keep her from public worship each year, though that was the place that it was especially provoking to her. We're impressed.

[23 : 30] But then she's no superwoman. And though she holds her tongue, she does let it get to her. And she loses her joy. She loses her peace.

She loses her contentment. She's found drowning in her tears and sadness. Less than a perfect response. But perhaps you can identify with her, at least in her problem, as you've been there in your problems.

But it's what she does next that is such an example to us. To you mothers and to all of us. What does she do in her tears, in her felt weakness and helplessness?

She takes it to the Lord in prayer. Well, that's a simple way to put it. But that's important. This is a big lesson, isn't it?

James 5.13. Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Does anybody have a problem? She should pray. She should pray. Mothers, mothers, are you learning to take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there?

[24 : 32] Do your problems bring you to the Lord in prayer? Right in the middle of the day. Do you stop? Do you call a timeout? Do you just pour out your heart to God in prayer?

Are you telling it to Jesus?

Are you telling it to Jesus? Are you doing it every day? Year after year, the problem was there.

Are you taking your burden to the Lord and casting it on him and not letting go of him until he blesses you according to his will? Well, our attention is directed to one particular time at Shiloh when Hannah prayed.

And I don't believe that that means that she never prayed about this problem before. Again, she never could have survived this long without casting her burden on the Lord.

[25 : 39] But this was a turning point in her life in dealing with her problem. And it happened in prayer. The turning point is often at the throne of grace.

You and Christ. What a privilege he has won for you. By his blood and righteousness. A new and living way whereby you can come and lay your hearts open before the Lord.

It's in prayer that things changed. Once when they had finished eating, verses 9 and 10, eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now, Eli, the priest, was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the Lord's temple.

And in bitterness of soul, Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. She poured out her soul to the Lord out of her great anguish and grief. I love that phrase.

She poured out her soul. David Psalm 62. Pour out your hearts to him at all times, ye people. Just take the picture of your heart and just empty it.

[26 : 46] Tell them all. Tell them everything. What's happening to you? How you feel about it? What's your fury? What's your worried about? Oh, Lord Almighty.

If you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me and not forget your servant, but give her a son. Then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life. And no razor shall ever touch his head.

She promises to give him back to the Lord. As a Nazarite. Special service to devote him to serve in the temple as a Nazarite from birth.

Mothers, what do you want for your children? Oh, I'd like to see them educated, healthy, married kids, grandkids, their own home, this and that and the other.

But more than anything else, I want them to belong to the Lord. I want them to be dedicated, devoted to the Lord all the days of their life.

[27 : 52] That's what she wants. That's what she prays for. That's what she says she will give him back for. And I'm struck by her surrender to God in prayer. This prayer of Hannah is one of surrender.

Mom, are you giving up your children individually to the Lord who gave them to you? Are you one by one saying, Lord, this one's yours?

What do you want? May your will be done. In their lives. And then notice her view of God in prayer. Not only her surrender, but her view of God.

She's talking to the Lord Almighty. He's the Lord of hosts. He rules over heaven and earth and everything in it. Does she really think for a moment that he, one so great, would care about the yearnings of a barren woman for children?

Yes, she does. She does indeed. Think that this great, almighty sovereign of the universe cares about the yearnings of my heart.

[28 : 59] And she spreads her heart before the Lord, believing that not only is he powerful enough to answer me, but he also cares about me. Here is a God of almighty power, but also of intimate personal concern.

All power and concern for me. One individual. That's her view of God. Mothers, is that your view of God? Do you know him like that?

The one with whom nothing is impossible, but also the one who cares about me and my impossibilities and my troubles and problems.

Do you pray to him like that? That he's that kind of God? Awesomely great. Awesomely touched by our longings and desires. There is a psalm in our psalter that celebrates God's answer to Hannah's prayer.

It's Psalm 113. And it quotes from Hannah's prayer of praise found in the very next chapter here, chapter 2. And it became a part of the national worship of God.

[30:12] They took the words of Hannah when God gave her a son and they incorporated it into the corporate worship of God's people. And that psalm does something.

It brings together these same two things about God that make him worthy of praise. He's great. He is exalted over all the nations.

He's over and above the heavens. Who is a God like our God who sits enthroned above the heavens and the earth?

He's exalted. He's exalted. And yet he has intimate concern. Concern for his people. He's high. But he stoops low.

How low? Right down to the dust heap. Down to the ashes. And he brings the poor and needy and he lifts them up. And the psalm ends. He sets the barren woman in her home.

[31:12] He settles the barren woman in her home as the happy mother of children. This is our God. This is your God. This is the God that Hannah knew and prayed to. And that is the takeaway from this story of Hannah recorded in Psalm 113 for posterity of all God's people.

That we might know our God is mighty and he is of intimate personal concern. So if you're in Christ, Hannah's God is your God.

And you might think that your problems are so small on the universal scale of things that does God even care? Yes, he cares. I know he cares. His heart is touched with my grief.

When the days are dreary, the long nights weary. I know my Savior cares. How do you know he cares? Because his word tells me, cast all your cares on him. Because he cares for you.

And if it's one of your cares, then it's one of his. If it's bothering you, then he wants to hear about it. That's what Christ won for us.

[32:22] A new and living way. To come before the concerned omnipotent. Now, it's this view of God that then gives Hannah such openness in prayer.

And she just empties her heart then. I mean, she had nowhere else to go. The woman she shared the house with would only mock her. Her husband, bless his heart, was woefully inadequate in comforting her.

And even the priest misunderstood her for a drunken woman. And so she turned to the only one who understood and who had power. Power.

Power to help her. Knowing that the one who closed her womb had power to open it. And so as she kept praying to the Lord, Eli the priest observed her mouth.

Hannah was praying in her heart. Her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. And Eli concludes she's drunk. And he chews her out for it. And let me just pause to say this again is showing us how low spiritual life was in Israel.

[33:26] Women were coming to the worship drunk. He's used to it. And he sees another one. And it upsets him. And then he rebukes her for it.

At least he thinks she's drunk. How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine. Poor, poor Hannah. The men in her life simply don't get it.

First her husband. Now the priest. Yes, God's own minister. God's own ministers can misunderstand you. Can falsely accuse you.

Can actually hurt you rather than help you. Eli could put up well enough with his wicked sons carrying on in the temple.

But he still got riled up over a drunken woman at church. Moms can be misunderstood. Moms can be slandered. Moms can be falsely accused.

[34 : 26] Moms can be not receive tender understanding even from their own husbands. Not having a clue of all that you're going through.

Especially those on the outside who don't live where you live. And so put yourself in Hannah's shoes. You've just been called a drunk. How are you going to answer that? She could have said a few choice words about his own sons.

But no, she says, not so, my Lord. I'm a woman who's deeply troubled. I've not been drinking wine or beer. I was pouring out my soul to the Lord.

Don't mistake me for a wicked woman. I've been praying out of my great anguish and grief. Do you hear the respectful tone? My Lord. There's the denial.

I'm not drunk. There's the explanation. My eyes are red, not from wine, but from tears. But what an amazing control of her tongue. Not answering evil with evil.

[35 : 32] Not returning a harsh word for a harsh word. Mothers, there is grace in Jesus to help you control your tongue. Such that the law of kindness is ever found on it.

But Matthew Henry says, when we are falsely accused, we have need to set a double watch before the door of our lips. Lest we pay back evil with evil. Well, Eli is caught up short.

He realizes his mistake and he changes his tune and he sends her off with a chief, a priestly blessing. Pleading for the God of Israel to grant her what she has asked of him.

And that's where we see Hannah's trust in God in her prayer. She goes on her way. She eats something. Her face was no longer downcast.

And her returning appetite is a sign of heart work that had been done in the place, in the activity of prayer. She comes from prayer, a different woman than the one who went to prayer.

[36 : 32] And mothers, is that not often the case with you? She believed the Lord heard her. And she's content to leave it in his hands.

That's how we should come from the place of prayer. The joy and peace that comes from believing.

I have just spoken to the one who rules the universe. And he knows me by name. And he cares about every concern of mine. And I have laid my cares on him.

That should change the way I leave. And it did for Hannah. Even before she knew that there was anything different. She's still childless.

Peninnah's still seeking to irritate her. And all this might have gone on for quite some time. But she's been to the Lord. And it changes her attitude. She leaves the petition in his lap.

[37 : 35] Well, God's answer to her prayer. They went back home. The Lord did remember her. And in the course of time, she conceives and gives birth to a son. And she named him Samuel. Why?

Because I asked of the Lord. I asked of the Lord. The word Samuel means heard of the Lord. Because I asked the Lord for her.

In other words, this son was the fruit of her prayers. Each time his name was called, she's reminded, this son is the Lord's answer to my prayers.

I love the Lord, for he heard my voice. He heard my cry for mercy. And because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

Because I asked him. Because I asked the Lord for him. Mothers, do you have a testimony of answered prayers for your children?

[38 : 39] Over how many things in your children's lives could you write? Because I asked the Lord. You see, does God deal with mothers that way?

Yes, he does. Yes, he does. He's the same God of Hannah that he is to you. And she follows through on her vow and waits until he's weaned, usually about three years in that time.

And then takes him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh to give him to the Lord as she had promised. You don't recognize me, Eli, she said several years later.

I'm that woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child and the Lord granted me what I asked of him. This is what I got for praying. This little boy.

And telling others multiplies the praises and the honor given to God. And that's what she's doing. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord. You never give to God anything but what he has first given you.

[39 : 41] And that's all Hannah does. She had received him from the Lord and now she presents him back to him. Gladly surrendering her precious treasure to the one who gave him.

But Hannah would be disappointed if on Mother's Day we left the spotlight on her. We didn't take the time but if you look down in chapter 2, the first 10 verses, give us Hannah's prayer of praise.

And she leaves all the praise at the feet of Jesus, at the feet of the Lord. She glorifies God. She rejoices in him. And so she would tell us that God deserves all the glory.

All the praise in my life. He's the one who shut my womb. He's the one who opened it. He's the one who let loose that loose cannon, Penina, having her way to irritate me.

Yes, he was the one who had me in that home with Penina. That too was necessary. It's all fitting in to God's work that as he's bringing about his wonderful solution.

[40 : 57] Had Penina not provoked Hannah, would she have ever been moved to such desperate prayer? Would she have ever been moved to the place of saying, Lord, if you give me a son, I'll give him back and he'll be yours the rest of his life.

It was the Lord. Behind her problem. And then using that problem to drive her to the Lord. And then answer in such a spectacular way of opening her womb and giving her a son.

And after she gave that son to the Lord, gave her five more. Isn't God good? Indeed, he settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children.

But there's more. Because the answer to Hannah's problem is the answer to the nation's problem. Because this little boy Samuel grew up to be a righteous prophet of God.

To give faithful spiritual leadership to Israel through a most critical period of her history. He would be the one who would anoint David as king and establish the throne on which the coming Messiah was to sit and now does sit.

[42 : 06] The throne of David. This is the God. Whose solution to Israel's problem and Hannah's problem is Samuel.

And he brings about his solution in a supernatural way that he might receive all the praise. This is the God who reigns over all of your problems.

Blessed troubles. Blessed troublemakers when they spur us on to the Lord in prayer. But there's still more.

You know, Hannah's song is taken up by another woman. Many hundreds of years later. In another impossible situation.

It's Mary, the virgin. What is more helpless and hopeless than a barren womb, if not a virgin's womb?

[43 : 19] That a virgin should give birth to a son as a virgin. Now we're in the realm of impossibility again. And so the angel Gabriel comes to her and tells her that you are going to give birth to a child.

And the virgin Mary says, but how will this be since I'm a virgin? It's never happened before. And the angel says, the Holy Spirit will come upon you and overshadow you.

And the thing conceived in your womb will be the son of the most high God. And this is the sixth month of your relative Elizabeth. Of whom it was said she is barren.

Because nothing is impossible with God. Here's the ultimate barrenness. The ultimate impossible womb.

A virgin's womb. Of ever bringing life into the world. And that was God's starting point.

[44 : 27] For the greatest impossibility that's ever been pulled off. That you and I should be saved from eternal damnation. That's the mission impossible. Me, a sinner who's violated God's law.

Who deserves his just wrath forever and ever. How will I ever escape that? If ever there's a problem that I cannot fix, that's it.

That's my biggest problem. But why all the barrenness in the Bible? Why use a virgin's womb as the starting point of salvation? Because God is showing that what's impossible with men.

Your salvation from hell is possible with God. And he will use a virgin's womb to bring about the impossible. To bring the eternal son of God into this world.

As a man. Who will keep God's law perfectly. And then lay down his life as a sacrifice on behalf of us guilty sinners. That we might be forgiven.

[45 : 31] Made right with God. And be safe from eternal damnation. The starting point is an impossibility. So mothers, fathers, man, woman, young person.

You say it's impossible for me to be saved. It's impossible for me to be helped in this situation. Well, Hannah's life is on record to introduce us to the one who does the impossible.

Let's worship him today. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

And that you would care about our problems. Encourage mothers. Encourage each one of us. That we would be drawn to you. And we would run from our problems to you.

The great problem solver. Thank you that in the blood of Jesus we have found salvation from sin and death and hell. And we thank you that in the Lord Jesus we have a living Savior.

[47 : 03] And one who bears our burdens daily. Help us to make use of him. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.