

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Samuel: God's Shift Of Israel From Apostasy Under The Judges To David's Reign

I. 1 Samuel: From Samuel To The Death Of Saul

A. God's Use Of Hannah's Oppression To Provide Israel A Godly Leader

(1 Samuel 1:1-20)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

God at times lets upright believers face intense, escalating oppression, and that raises the question, "Why?":

(1) On the national level, the Associated Press last week ran the story, "Virginia governor enables 200,000 felons to vote with executive order" (Republican-American, April 23, 2016, p. 3A) that reported how Governor Terry McAuliffe "in the swing state of Virginia" signed "a sweeping executive order" to permit "(m)ore than 200,000 convicted felons" to "be able to cast ballots . . . in November." Thus, godless citizens are being fed into the voting process in a swing state that could affect the outcome of the national election, a great oppression to the upright!

(2) The Republican-American ran a poll on April 22, 2016 on the question, "Should undocumented students be eligible for financial aid to state schools?" and 90% of the respondents answered "No"! Yet, the issue is being considered by legislators in spite of this overwhelming opinion to the contrary, an oppressive matter! (Ibid., p. 2A)

(3) Some of us face it in personal relationships: since just last Sunday, I have become aware of several cases where upright believers are being "crowded" into escalating, "no-win," oppressive situations in their relationships!

Need: *So we ask, "Why does GOD at times let us face great, escalating oppression, and how are we to respond?!"*

- I. Hannah faced great, escalating oppression over her infertility that God Himself had initiated, 1:1-8:**
 - A. Due to Hannah's barrenness that 1 Samuel 1:5b claims God Himself had caused, her husband Elkanah wed a second woman who bore him children (1 Sam. 1:2; B. K. C., O. T., p. 433). Such bigamy by even a Levite, an expert in the Law (1 Chr. 6:33-38; Mal. 2:4-7), illustrated Israel's lawlessness at the end of the judges, Ibid.
 - B. Elkanah still loved Hannah, so he would give her a double portion of the sacrifice meat when the family went to worship at the tabernacle (1 Sam. 1:4-5 NIV), but this made his second wife Peninnah jealous, and she reacted by persecuting Hannah about her infertility so that Hannah could not eat, but only weep, v. 6-7 NIV.
 - C. Not only was Elkanah insensitive to the trouble he had produced for Hannah in marrying Peninnah to bear him children and then giving Hannah a double portion that made Peninnah jealous of her, he then criticized Hannah for fasting and weeping by claiming that he was better for her than ten sons, 1 Samuel 1:8 NIV.
 - D. Peninnah saw she could make Elkanah criticize Hannah if she kept pestering her, so she pestered her the more to enhance Hannah's weeping and fasting to get Elkanah so annoyed at Hannah that he might love her less!
 - E. The second wife's growing oppression of her would have tempted Hannah to feel insecure about her marriage, for Peninnah's escalating persecution enhanced Hannah's grief that made Elkanah more annoyed at Hannah!
 - F. This trial thus fed on itself, making matters worse for Hannah year after year: she felt as if she was spiraling downward into the sinkhole of divorce and its resulting loss of her means of a livelihood, 1 Samuel 1:3-8 NIV.
 - G. The loss of a livelihood for a divorced woman in a man-dominated culture in an era known for its immoral abuses of women as evidenced by the concubine atrocity recorded in Judges 19 would have left Hannah in a dangerous state, and her realizing this threat only escalated Hannah's anxiety, frustration and grief!
- II. In desperation, Hannah finally applied the Scripture precedent of Samson's mother to ask God for a baby, vowing that if He gave her a son, she would devote him to God as a Nazirite for life, 1 Sam. 1:9-11:**
 - A. On one trip to the tabernacle, Hannah wept bitterly and prayed, vowing that if God would note her grief and give her a son, she would give him to the Lord for life, that no razor would come on his head, 1 Sam. 1:9-11.
 - B. This petition promised that her son would be like Samson, a Nazirite whom the Lord had given to a woman in the same era of Israel's judges, a woman who like Hannah had initially been childless, Judges 13:1-5.
 - C. In effect, Hannah recalled the Scripture precedent of Samson's mother, so she believed that were she to offer to devote her son to God as a Nazirite for life in line with the precedent of Samson's mother and the Numbers 6:1-8 rule on Nazirite vows were God to enable her to bear a son, the Lord would answer her prayer! (Ibid.)
- III. The Lord indeed answered Hannah's prayer, providing her the baby boy Samuel, 1 Samuel 1:12-20:**
 - A. When the high priest Eli observed Hannah praying silently at the tabernacle as she moved her lips, he thought she was one of many drunk women of that apostate era, so he reprimanded her for her intemperance, v. 13-14.
 - B. Hannah replied that she was quite sober, explaining that she had prayed under duress, so Eli encouraged her, expressing his hope that God might give her what she had petitioned of Him, 1 Samuel 1:15-17.

- C. Encouraged by the words of the nation's high priest, and trusting God to answer her prayer, Hannah returned to performing her duties as Elkanah's wife, eating some food and ceasing to be despondent, 1 Samuel 1:18.
 - D. After worshiping the Lord, the family returned home, and God enabled Hannah to bear her husband a son named Samuel, meaning, "heard of God," because God had heard her prayer, Ibid.; 1 Samuel 1:19-20.
- IV. From God's view, it was necessary that He let Hannah face this great, escalating oppression that she would come to bear a lifelong Nazirite son who would be raised in godliness to check Israel's darkness:**
- A. As seen in the Levite Elkanah's low spirituality as a bigamist with insensitivity (1 Sam. 1:2-7) and in the high priest's chiding Hannah for looking like one of many drunk woman at the tabernacle (1 Sam. 1:13-14), the era of the judges ended in such great apostasy, it was hard to raise a spiritual leader in even usually "good" homes!
 - B. Worse, 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22 reveals that even the high priest's sons desecrated the Lord's sacrifices and engaged in "ritual fornication in the very precincts of the tabernacle at Shiloh in accord with Canaanite cultic practice" (Ibid., p. 434-435), so it was hard to find a good place *anywhere* to rear a godly leader for Israel!
 - C. God thus needed to develop a godly Levitical, spiritual leader who was **separate** from sin by providing an **unusual setting for him to be reared, necessitating Hannah's initial childlessness and escalating suffering:**
 1. God needed a spiritual leader to be reared independent of a less-than-godly Levite Elkanah and the poor fathering of Eli, all while keeping the boy exposed to Israel at the tabernacle for future spiritual leadership.
 2. However, that could occur only if Hannah bore a son and kept him home until he was weaned only then to devote him to mature in the tabernacle, but there still be separate enough from Eli's sons as not part of Eli's actual family so he would not indulge in the sins of Eli's sons because his godly mother would yearly visit him at the tabernacle to influence him for God until he matured into the right leader, 1:24-28; 2:11, 17-19!
 3. God also had to put the boy in contact with Himself (1 Sam. 3:1-21) to provide the proper "fathering" the boy needed from God for leadership in view of Eli's failure to father his own sons well, cf. 1 Sam. 2:27-29.
 4. To achieve all this, God needed Hannah to face great, escalating oppression over barrenness He caused to drive her to vow to devote her son to be a Nazirite for life at the tabernacle where God could father him into Israel's leader were God to look on Hannah's affliction and give her a son -- so that is what happened!

Lesson: (1) *God arranged for Hannah to face intense, escalating oppression to drive her to vow to give her son to the Lord for life as a holy Nazirite because God needed such a son to be developed into a godly leader to save Israel from utter ruin in apostasy.* (2) *Hannah found her direction for handling her oppressive trial through the Scripture precedent of Samson's mother who lived before her in her same era of the latter part of the judges.*

Application: (1) *May we believe in Christ for salvation, John 3:16.* (2) *If facing great, escalating oppression, may we see it as DIVINELY PERMITTED to drive us to live APART from the ungodliness around us, for God wants us to be holy, or SEPARATE from the darkness that He might USE us to COUNTER it.* (3) *May we like Hannah gain guidance for addressing the great, escalating oppression we face from God's Scripture precedents.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Last Sunday, a prayer request came in from the congregation for the pastoral prayer that we might have the wisdom to know how to vote in the Connecticut presidential primary that was scheduled for last Tuesday. That was a good request for me: at the time, and for the first time ever, I was not sure how to vote. I had serious concerns about the candidates my party offered, and my wife even initially differed with me on how she planned to vote.

However, on Monday, an event occurred that convinced both of us how we were to vote! Of note, my wife then testified that the Lord had answered the prayer we had offered on Sunday on how we should vote!

Yet, the trial didn't end there, but it escalated into the voting process itself! When we arrived at town hall to cast our votes, two people tried to direct us to the wrong political party table, and we had to resist their efforts and head toward the table where our party workers were seated! Then, when it came time to vote, the pen at my voting station didn't work, so I asked an aide for a new pen, and the one she handed me just barely marked the ballot! I left the hall, hoping my vote counted and longing for the old voting machines with their decisive mechanical levers!

In the end, the election results were so lopsided that my vote did not make a difference anyway! What I learned in the whole voting process was that American politics is far from holy, far from being the door for divine blessing. I came away from the whole process longing for heaven where Philippians 3:20 claims we believers have our true citizenship and hope! I learned the lesson of this sermon!!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. Then, as believers, may we respond to the trials God allows us to face from ungodliness to live HOLY lives, SEPARATE from the darkness about us as ambassadors for Christ!