



BURUBURU COMMUNITY CENTRE CHURCH OF GOD NAIROBI

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THE POWER OF A PRAYING WOMAN

1 SAMUEL 1:1-20

SERMON PREACHED ON 4TH NOVEMBER 2018 BY REV. BONFACE

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1. INTRODUCTION

The author begins by telling us about the conditions under which Samuel was born. His father was known as Elkanah, an Ephraimite from Ramathaim in Ephraim. He had two wives. One was Peninnah and the other was Hannah. Peninnah had children while Hannah had none, and this condition gave her problem year after year as she was mocked and provoked by her co-wife. Fed up with the constant provocation from her co-wife, Hannah decided to cry to Jehovah in anguish and ask for a child. In utter desperation for a child Hannah made a vow that if God gave her a son she would give him back to him as His servant. Her request was granted and she conceived and bore a son whom she called Samuel.

The family of Elkanah was a religious family. All families in Kenya should be so. Ministers of the gospel should be patterns of family religion. Elkanah went up at the solemn feasts to the tabernacle at Shiloh, to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts.

Elkanah was a country Levite who went up as a common Israelite, with his own sacrifices, to encourage his neighbours and set them a good example. When he sacrificed he worshipped, joining prayer and thanksgiving with his sacrifices. In this course of religion he was constant, for he went up yearly.

And that which made it the more commendable in him was:

- i. That there was a general decay and neglect of religion in the nations. Some among them worshipped other gods, and yet Elkanah kept his

integrity; whatever others did, his resolution was that he and his house should serve the Lord.

- ii. That Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were the men that were now chiefly employed in the service of the house of God; and they were men that conducted themselves very ill in their place; yet Elkanah went up to sacrifice.

Elkanah as we have seen in the introduction married two wives: Peninnah and Hannah.

That which followed upon this error was that the two wives could not agree. They had different blessings: Peninnah, was fruitful and had many children, Hannah, was childless indeed, but she was very dear to her husband, and he took all occasions to let both her and others know that she was so, and many a worthy portion he gave her (1Samuel 1:5), and this should have made her easy and thankful. But they were of different tempers: Peninnah could not bear the blessing of fruitfulness, but she grew haughty and insolent; Hannah could not bear the affliction of barrenness, but she became miserable and discontented: and Elkanah had a difficult part to act between them.

What did Elkanah do?

- i. Elkanah kept up his attendance at God's altar notwithstanding this unhappy difference in his family, and took his wives and children with him, that, if they could not agree in other things, they might agree to worship God together.

Lesson: If the devotions of a family prevail not to put an end to its divisions, yet let not the divisions put a stop to the devotions.

- ii. He did all he could to encourage Hannah, and to keep up her spirits under her affliction, 1Samuel 1:4, 5.

a) Elkanah loved his wife never the less for her being barren.

Lesson: Christ loves his church, notwithstanding her infirmities, her barrenness; and so ought men to love their wives, Eph 5:25.

- iii. He studied to show his love so much the more because she was afflicted, insulted, and low-spirited.

Lesson: It is wisdom and duty to support the weakest, and to hold up those that are run down.

- iv. He showed his great love to her by the share he gave her of his peace-offerings.

Lesson: Thus we should testify our affection to our friends and relations, by abounding in prayer for them. The better we love them the more room we give them in our prayers.

2. PENINNAH:

Peninnah was extremely irritable and provoking. However, she didn't know that her character towards Hannah was pushing her to her miracle.

- i. She upbraided Hannah with her affliction, despised her because she was barren, and gave her taunting language, as one whom Heaven did not favour.
- ii. She envied the interest she had in the love of Elkanah, and the more kind he was to her the more was she exasperated against her.

She did this most when they went up to the house of the Lord, perhaps because then they were more together than at other times, or because then Elkanah showed his affection most to Hannah. (David said, "Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me" Psalm 41:9)

She continued to do this from year to year, not once or twice, but it was her constant practice; neither deference to her husband nor compassion to Hannah could break her of it.

3. Hannah.

Hannah (poor woman) could not hear the provocation: She wept, and did not eat, 1Samuel 1:7. It made her uneasy to herself and to all her relations. She did not eat of the feast; her trouble took away her appetite, made her unfit for any company. She decided in her agony to raise her eyes to God.

If ever she will make a more solemn address than ordinary to the throne of grace upon this errand, now is the time. They are at Shiloh, at the door of the tabernacle, where God had promised to meet his people, (which was the house of prayer). Here Hannah prayed to God, now concerning Hannah's prayer we may observe:

- i. The warm and lively devotion there was in it, which appeared in several instances, for our direction in prayer.
 - a) She improved the present grief and trouble of her spirit for the exciting and quickening of her pious affections in prayer: Being in bitterness of soul, she prayed, 1Samuel 1:10.
- ii. She mingled tears with her prayers. It was not a dry prayer: she wept sore. Like a true Israelite, she wept and made supplication Hosea 12:4,

with an eye to the tender mercy of our God, who knows the troubled soul. The prayer came from her heart, as the tears from her eyes.

- iii. She was very particular, and yet very modest, in her petition. She begged a child, a male child that it might be fit to serve in the tabernacle.

Lesson: God gives us leave, in prayer, not only to ask good things in general, but to mention that special good thing which we most need and desire.

- iv. She made a solemn vow, or promise, that if God would give her a son she would give him up to God, 1Samuel 1:11. He would be by birth a Levite, and so devoted to the service of God, but he should be by her vow a Nazarite, and his very childhood should be sacred.
- v. She spoke all this so softly that none could hear her. Her lips moved, but her voice was not heard, 1Samuel 1:13. Hereby she testified her belief of God's knowledge of the heart and its desires. Thoughts are words to him, nor is he one of those gods that must be cried aloud to, 1Kings 18:27.

Lesson: It was likewise an instance of her humility and holy shamefacedness in her approach to God.

At length the Lord remembered Hannah, the very thing she desired (1Samuel 1:11), and more she needed not desire, that was enough, for then she conceived and bore a son. Though God seem long to forget his people's burdens, troubles, cares, and prayers, yet he will at length make it to appear that they are not out of his mind. This son the mother called Samuel, 1Samuel 1:20.

4. CONCLUSION.

In the midst of many afflictions that Hannah went through, she improved the present grief and trouble of her spirit for the exciting and quickening of her devout affections in prayer: Being in bitterness of soul, she prayed, 1Samuel 1:10. We should make good use of our prayer in our afflictions, they should make us the more lively in our addresses to God. Our blessed Savior himself, being in agony, prayed more earnestly, Luke 22:44. The Bible tells us that God remembered Hannah, He blessed her with a baby boy, and thereafter three sons and two daughters, 1 Samuel 2:21. May God remember you, may He favor you, and may He be gracious to you. Amen

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