

Eyes that See the Greater Reality

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- [0 : 0 0] Good afternoon, everyone. Well, we're back in 1 Samuel this week after having a couple of weeks off. So it'd be great if you could have that open in front of you.
- And we'll be reading from chapter 2, the start of chapter 2 of 1 Samuel. And you'll find that on page 225 of your church Bibles. And as you're opening that up, let me pray for us.
- Father God, we do thank you for the opportunity to meet together and to be encouraged from your word in the middle of our week.
- We thank you that you're speaking, God. We thank you that you've communicated to us what life is about and what's really happening beyond what we see with our eyes.
- So we pray as we read your word together now and study it, that you would make yourself clear to us. Show us where the world is heading and help us to live as confident Christians in your world.
- [1 : 0 6] And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So 1 Samuel chapter 2, starting from verse 1. And Hannah prayed and said, My heart exalts 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 ye. There is no rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly. Let not arrogance come from your mouth.
- For the Lord is a God of knowledge. And by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken. But the feeble bind on strength.
- Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread. But those who are hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven. But she who has many children is forlorn.
- [2 : 1 2] The Lord kills and brings to life. He brings down to shale and raises up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich. He brings low and he exalts.
- He raises up the poor from the dust. He lifts the needy from the ash heap. To make them sit with princes. And inherit a seat of honor. For the pillar of the earth are the Lord's.
- And on them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his faithful ones. But the wicked shall be cut off in darkness. For not by might shall a man prevail.
- The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces. Against them he will thunder in heaven. Then the Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king.
- And exalt the power of his anointed. I wonder. Do you ever look at the world. And feel like giving up on trusting Jesus.
- [3 : 1 5] The world just seems so overwhelmingly powerful. And you can't see how Jesus is possibly going to win in the end. Do you ever think that way?
- It's so easy isn't it to be left flattened. By the might of the world that we see all around us. So what's the remedy. To falling into that kind of thinking.
- Well here in Hannah's prayer. I think we find solid truths. That will keep us going. Though our senses might scream at us. That living for Jesus. Is a lost cause.

But before we delve into this remarkable prayer. Let's just remind ourselves of what happened. Just a couple of weeks ago. When we looked at chapter one. Chapter one was all about God. Turning around the fortunes.

For Hannah. He did the seemingly impossible. Making a barren woman. Bear a child. And here in Hannah's prayer. We get insight into how she responded.

[4 : 16] To that amazing event in her life. And what she wanted God's people. To learn from it. And the conclusions that she draws from it. Are really quite remarkable.

She makes huge conclusions. About the nature of our God. And the future of the world. From just how God has worked. In her seemingly insignificant life. And there's something for us to learn from that.

Isn't there? We too must let the small things. The little victories. Remind us of the big victory. That is coming at the end of time. That will keep us going.

And not be flattened. By the might of the world. But more on that in a minute. But let's look at our first point. For this afternoon. This is what Hannah would have us know. And have us do. She'd have us walk tall.

For God is uniquely able to save. Looking at verses 1 to 2. Walk tall. For God is uniquely able to save. I've already mentioned how easy it is.

[5 : 15] For our heads to hang low as Christians. The derision of the world wears us down. Just like Penina's jibes. Back in chapter 1. Wore Hannah down. But when God acts in our lives.

It can snap us. Out of that hypnotizing despair. And show us the reality behind the facade. That's what happened here for Hannah. Remember back in chapter 1.

Verse 8. Hannah's heart was described as being sad. She was vexed and anguished. A head hung low. But because of God's amazing work in her life.

Bringing life from her barren womb. A heart is turned from misery to joy. Verse 1. Hannah prayed and said. My heart exalts in the Lord. My strength is exalted in the Lord.

She has been transformed from a despairing follower of God. To a joyous follower of God. Because of his great work in her life. The phrase.

[6 : 19] My strength is exalted. Exalted in the Lord. Is really quite a weak translation. It literally means. My horn is raised high. We're to picture a great beast.

His horn is their glory. And rather than hang that horn down low in despair. Feeling dejected. Now stands tall. Can face her enemies. And that's just how Hannah felt.

She knew that she had the sovereign Lord of all the universe fighting for her. He had already performed an extraordinary work in her life. So she could now stand tall in front of all her enemies.

Knowing that she is going to be okay. She'll be fine. God had done the miraculous. And it would now be Hannah. Who would be deriding her enemies. Rather than the other way around.

Now Penina would be left eating her words. The phrase. My mouth derides my enemies. Is a pretty weak translation too. It literally means. My mouth is ready to devour all my enemies.

[7 : 22] Hannah knew that she wouldn't be the one who was defeated in the end. She wouldn't be the one who was consumed. Rather her enemies would be. And the thing that has highlighted this to her.

Assured her of all this. Is the salvation. That she has already experienced. Did you notice that word? Now you might think.

Isn't it a bit grand to refer to the birth of a child. As salvation. I mean that's a pretty big Bible word. Isn't it?

Salvation. And we might wonder whether giving birth to a child. Really warrants the use of that word. But yes it does. Hannah has experienced salvation.

It's a micro salvation. As she's vindicated in front of all her enemies. In front of Penina. But it is salvation. Nonetheless. And Hannah recognizes that the small acts of salvation we experience in life.

[8 : 23] Point us to something far greater. What she is experiencing in her life. Is a scale model. Of the great salvation that is to come.

The victory over all enemies. That will eventually come when Jesus returns. So we must be careful not to demean Hannah of her experience. Or demean our own experiences when God acts in our lives.

We mustn't undermine Hannah's salvation. Just because it will one day be dwarfed by something much greater. Every time God acts in our lives against the odds.

Lifts us up when we feel like there's no hope. We are given clues and evidences. Of what God will do for us at the end. God will save his people at the end.

Enemies will be silenced. And God is the only one who can make that happen. For verse 2. God is utterly unique and set apart from his creation.

[9 : 24] And will look after his people. No one else is holy. No one else is set apart from creation like God is.

He is the only one who is capable of standing back from the whole world. And controlling absolutely everything that goes on in it. Everything else in existence is just a creative thing.

Who is part of the fabric of this world order. And dancing to God's tune. So the message is don't trust in anything else other than God. God alone must be the security of his people.

And God's people back then when this book was written needed to know this. It must have been so tempting for them. Either just to hang their heads low and think that God was completely finished with Israel.

Or to set their hopes on something else to save them. For God just didn't seem all that active in their world. Everything was falling apart. But Hannah says no.

[10 : 28] Only God is able to save. None other. Trust in him. And hold your head high. Don't be worn down by the world around you.

One day your salvation will be evident to all. And your enemies will be the ones left eating their words. Not you. Well moving on to our second point.

If God's assured salvation should lead us to walk tall. And have confidence as believers. Then the flip side of that for our enemies is this.

They must be humble. For God knows. And he transforms. Looking at verses 3 to 8. Be humble. For God knows.

And transforms. Verse 3 makes this very clear. Hannah says. Talk no more so very proudly. Let not arrogance come from your mouth.

[11 : 24] For the Lord is a God of knowledge. And by him actions are weighed. It's a stark warning. It's like Hannah is looking around at all her opponents.

Her horn now lifted high in confidence and saying. Don't be so proud. Don't be arrogant. Don't be confident in your own strength.

You might look strong now. But it might not always be the case. Don't think you can mock me. And harass me. And get away with it. For God is a God of knowledge.

He sees everything that is going on. Every mocking remark will be recorded. And God will carefully weigh up what he is going to do with you.

That's what Hannah says to her enemies. You've seen what he's capable of. He can make the seemingly impossible possible. He can even bring life from a dead womb.

[12 : 27] He can turn the world order on its head in an instant. So don't be arrogant. Likewise for Israel years later. The surrounding nations may have laughed at them.

Mocked them. Asking where their God was. For everything had fallen into such disrepair and decline. But those enemies of Israel should be careful. They don't dictate the affairs that happen in the world.

God does. And the God who sees and knows. Might turn the situation on its head in a second. They might find themselves in decline and being derided in the future.

Where once they had arrogantly prospered. And that comes out I think in these couplets that Hannah prays from verse 4 onwards. She wants her enemies to know that God can transform a situation just like that.

And she wants God's people to know that too. That they might not give up in despair. Verse 4. Hannah knows that God has done this before.

[13 : 45] Remember Egypt? Remember what happened there? The superpower of the time humbled as God brought plague upon plague upon them. And left them buried at the bottom of the Red Sea.

And later in this book something similar will happen with the Philistines. Goliath the mighty warrior will be felled by a shepherd boy with just a sling.

Verse 5. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread. But those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.

Later in the book of 1 Samuel we will meet a very rich man. Nabal. Who feasted like a king. But refused to give scraps of food to a stranger.

The strangers well they are well provided for. But Nabal dies prematurely at his table with a full stomach. Or think of Eli and his sons in just the next chapter.

[14 : 46] Read on after the service. They fastened themselves. Eli and his sons on the sacrifices of God's people. But are left destitute in the end.

So don't think world around you. That having plenty means that you have security. It doesn't. The barren has born seven.

But she who has many children is forlorn. Likewise. A full cradle. There is no security in life either.

God gives. And he can take away. And the clearest example of that is in verse 6. The Lord kills and brings to life. He brings down the shale and he raises up.

One Samuel is full of this happening. Eli and his sons are killed for their unfaithfulness. Mighty Saul, the faithless king, dies on Mount Gilboa for his disobedience.

[15 : 50] And life is brought from a dead womb. God does impossible things in one Samuel. Even the most fixed and certain realities.

Death and life can be transformed by the power of our God. And verse 7 and 8. The Lord makes poor and makes rich.

He brings low and he exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust. He lifts the needy from the ash heap. Samuel and later David are plucked from obscurity to lead Israel.

And if we think back to Egypt, remember what happened there. Slaves were made free men. Whilst their wealthy oppressors were laid bare and plundered by them. We don't think God is a God who does this, I don't think.

I think we act often like atheists. We don't really think God is all that at work in the world. Doing all that he promises here. But he is.

- [16 : 55] He's always doing this. He's always doing these incredible things for his people. So stay humble enemies is the message. Don't get ahead of yourself.
- Don't think your might or your prosperity means that you're on the winning side. And have the right to harass God's people. The Lord is a God of knowledge. He sees.
- And he's weighing up absolutely everything. And in just the right time, he will do what he needs to do for his people. So be careful. Or you might end up like Egypt.
- Or Eli or Nabal. And God's people. Well just don't think he's inactive. That he lacks the power or the willingness to transform.
- He sees and he is weighing absolutely everything up. And he will act to transform the circumstances of his people at just the right time. Just like he has done all throughout history.
- [17 : 54] Like he did in Egypt. Like he did in Hannah's life. Don't let the might of your enemies and the prosperity that they have fool you. It's all just smokes and mirrors.
- Those things offer absolutely no security at all. Only belonging to God. The rock. The one set apart from his creation. Offers any security at all.
- Only siding with him. Ensures victory in the end. And the second part of verse 8 reminds us of this. The pillars of the earth are the Lord's.
- And on them he has set the world. God is the one who's in control of all things. He is the powerful one. The power and might on display in the world may seem overwhelming to us at times.
- But they're just pieces on a chess board. They have no power in of themselves. It's all God given. And he can take it away in a split second.
- [18 : 58] Now that leads us on to our last point. Remain faithful for God's king will bring victory. Looking at verses 9 and 10.
- Remain faithful for God's king will bring victory. Verse 9 is really a summary of the preceding verses. God is powerfully working for the cause of his faithful people.
- Though it may not seem all that apparent to us at times. And the days of God's enemies are numbered. Though they look immovable in their might. That is just what Hannah's fleshed out in more detail in the verses before, isn't it?
- But verse 9 raises the question. How is this going to happen? And we get the answer to that in verse 10. Adversaries will be broken into pieces.
- In fact, the whole earth will be judged at the end of time. But God is going to raise up a king to do the work. God will raise up the strength of a human king who will do his work in the world.
- [20 : 03] He will defend his people, bring about their prospering, and vindicate them in front of all their enemies. Now, isn't it quite remarkable that Hannah could see these things so clearly?
- That she could see God's activity to save his people and crush his enemies will be funneled through a human king. I mean, she's still living in the days of the judges.
- I mean, there certainly were promises that Israel would one day have kings throughout the Old Testament. There's passage in Deuteronomy and Genesis that suggests that. But it's still staggering that Hannah spoke these words with confidence that a king was coming.
- And it seems that she thought he was just around the corner. She sees with absolute clarity where the future was heading. And that God's agent to bring salvation and transform the world was going to be an earthly king.

And in decades to come, after Hannah, God's people would see partial fulfillment of this promise. As David takes the throne and his son Solomon after him, the Philistines would be subdued.

[21 : 15] They would save God's people and bring prosperity to God's people who've been battered for generations. But the original receivers of this book, well, they didn't have such promising kings on their horizon, did they?

They came after the days of Solomon. In fact, they had just seen train wreck of kings ever since David and Solomon. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, had wrecked the kingdom, torn it in two.

And every king after him pretty much had been a bad egg. But despite what their senses screamed to them to abandon God's chosen king, David's descendants and perhaps give Saul's family another go or somebody else.

The only hope that they had a victory in the end of salvation was bound up in David's house. For later on in this book, God will make promises to David that a scepter will not depart from his house.

God's covenant will work for his one family, no matter what, no matter how mixed the bag they are. And thus Israel must not turn to other kings just because on the surface, it looks like salvation couldn't possibly come from these weak kings.

[22 : 36] Well, the message is the same for us, isn't it? We too must stick with God's ordained king. Victory and salvation will only come through the Christ, God's chosen king, the Lord Jesus.

And therefore, it isn't surprising at all, I think, that the Gospel of Luke starts with a very similar prayer and song to this one. A song sung by a woman who's about to experience an even more miraculous birth than that of Hannah, Mary.

Let me read that prayer to you that Mary prays before Jesus' birth. So you can just appreciate how staggeringly similar it is to Hannah's prayer here in chapter 2.

This is what she prays in Luke 2. My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Just like Hannah, her heart's exalted in the Lord.

For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed. For he who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name.

[23 : 48] And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.

Staggeringly similar. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy. As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.

Just before Jesus' arrival in the world, we get a repeat of these amazing truths that Hannah declares back in 1 Samuel. And the reason for that is because these promises are just about to come to their full fruition through the work of Jesus Christ.

God's chosen king. We see him, don't we? We see him do all the things that this prayer suggests. We see him raise the lowly. We see him raise the dead, feed the hungry, lift up the afflicted in the gospels.

[24 : 59] We see him bring down the proud and the lofty too. But these, just like Hannah's experience, are just micro-salvations, miniature models of what he will do when he returns at the end.

When he returns, he will judge the ends of the earth just like verse 10 promises. He will crush his enemies beneath his feet. He will vindicate his people.

He will turn the status quo upside down. The mighty and the prosperous who derided his people will be left defeated and empty.

And his battered church will be bound up and will stand with their heads held high. So the message is for us this afternoon. Don't give up on your king.

Remain faithful to the Lord Jesus. For victory is coming in the end. And it can only come one way through God's chosen king. Stick on his side.

[26 : 01] Don't be fooled by the world with all its pomp and show. It may look impressive. But friends may even arrogantly undermine your faith.

But it's all smoke and mirrors. And it won't be that way forever. Victory is coming. Salvation is coming. And the only way to experience it is to stick with King Jesus.

Let me pray for us. Let's pray for us. Father God, we admit that we often do look at the world around us and feel overwhelmed and small.

We look at the church and we think, how could this possibly in one day fill the entire earth? But Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you that you will bring about these things. You will turn things upside down. Your people one day will reign with you. And your enemies will be defeated. For the Lord Jesus has come.

[27 : 09] And he's achieved all that needs to be achieved. And thank you that we just wait out now until the day he returns. Thank you that we have such hope and such confidence because of what the Lord has already done.

Help us, we pray, just to stick with him. Not to write him and his kingdom off just because our eyes around us see that the church looks somewhat pathetic at times.

And the world so crazily powerful. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.