

Trusting for a Turnaround

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we come to our Bible reading now, so if you take your Bibles and turn to the beginning of the book of 1 Samuel, 1 Samuel chapter 1.

If you have one of the church visitors' Bibles, the red ones, that is page 225. And Andy Ritson is going to be preaching on these first few chapters of 1 Samuel for the next few weeks.

It wasn't that long ago we dipped into 1 Samuel, a little bit later on, the stories of the lost ark in chapter 4. But here we're going back and we're going to read all about how it all began and the beginnings and the birth of Samuel and how he led in time to the great King David.

So we're going to read 1 Samuel chapter 1 and verse 1, right through to chapter 2 and verse 11. So there was a man, a certain man of Ramatai and Zophim of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah, the son of Jehoram, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuth, an Ephrathite.

He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

[1 : 3 0] Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the Lord.

On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah, his wife, and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah, he gave a double portion because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb.

And her rival used to provoke her grievously, to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. And so it went on year by year.

As often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she used to provoke her. Therefore, Hannah wept and would not eat. And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat?

And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons? After they'd eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose.

[2 : 3 6] Now, Eli, the priest, was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly.

And she vowed a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life.

And no razor shall touch his head. And she continued praying before the Lord. And Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart.

Only her lips moved and her voice was not heard. Therefore, Eli took her to be a drunken woman. And Eli said to her, how long will you go on being drunk? Put away your wine from you.

But Hannah answered, no, my Lord. I'm a woman troubled in spirit. I have neither drunk wine nor strong drink. But I've been pouring out my soul before the Lord.

[3 : 41] Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman. For all along I've been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation. Then Eli answered, go in peace.

And the God of Israel, grant your petition that you have made to him. And she said, let your servant find favor in your eyes. Then the woman went away at eight.

And her face was no longer sad. They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord. Then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah, his wife.

And the Lord remembered her. And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. And she called his name Samuel. For she said, I have asked for him from the Lord.

The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up. For she said to her husband, as soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him.

[4 : 49] So that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there forever. The Elkanah husband said to her, do what seems best to you. Wait until you've weaned him.

Only may the Lord establish his word. So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her.

Along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah flower, and a skin of wine. And she brought them to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. And the child was young. And they slaughtered the bull and they brought the child to Eli.

And she said, O my Lord, as you live, my Lord, I am the woman who is standing here in your presence praying to the Lord. For this child I prayed. And the Lord has granted me by a petition that I made to him.

Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.

[5 : 53] 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 you. 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 were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven. But she who has many children is forlorn.

The Lord kills and brings to life. He brings down to Sheol and raises up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich.

[6 : 54] He brings low and he exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust. He lifts up the needy from the ash heap.

To make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars 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. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king. And exalt the power of his anointed.

Then Alcana went home to Rama. But the boy ministered to the Lord. In the presence of Eli the priest.

[7 : 58] Amen. And may God bless to us. This marvelous reading of his word. Well please do have the start of 1 Samuel open in front of you.

When life gets tough. What are you going to pin all your hopes on? It's a searching question isn't it?

Life is full of disappointments if we're honest. Things in our personal lives don't go to plan. We have dreams and aspirations that are never realized.

Life often isn't like we hoped it would be. We don't get the job we hoped for. Relationships sometimes go sour. And we often just feel trapped by our own personal circumstances.

We feel that it's always winter. And never spring. The treadmill never seems to slow down so we can catch a break. We can be hit by disappointment after disappointment.

[9 : 04] And disappointments aren't just constrained to our personal lives are they? For we often recognize that we need a big turnaround in our fortunes.

In church life too at times. We often feel that we could be doing a much better job. At reaching the world around us for Jesus. We long for our ministry as a church to be more fruitful than it is.

Perhaps as fruitful as it has been in past decades. At times we look at our state of affairs. Both personally and in terms of church's work in the world.

And if we're honest we can find ourselves despairing. Hope can quickly dwindle. And we find ourselves craving a big reversal of fortunes.

But you know these thoughts, this feeling, it isn't new. This has at times been the experience of many of God's people all through the ages.

[10 : 06] For it often feels like the glory days are behind us. And that's why it's so fitting I think that the book of Samuel starts off with this story of Hannah. For it's a story all about the reversal of fortunes.

The thing that God's people craved in their day as well as ours. This story is about reverse on both a small scale. With regards to Hannah's life and her circumstances.

But also on the larger scale too. In terms of the circumstances God's kingdom people found themselves in. Well let's delve into this gripping and emotionally charged story shall we.

Verse 1 and verse 2 set out the problem for us. There was a man from Ephraim called Elkanah who had two wives. Hannah and Peninnah.

Peninnah had children but Hannah had none. Hannah was barren. As verse 5 and 6 put it. The Lord had closed Hannah's womb.

[11 : 14] And yes barrenness was as devastating back then as it is in our world today. But what made matters worse for Hannah was the fact that motor mouthed overly fertile Peninnah.

Who seemingly you could cough on and should conceive. Used this as an opportunity to get one over on Hannah. Peninnah was the kind of woman who loved to kick you when you were down and add insult to injury.

Let's see this forked tongue woman in action. Verse 3. Year by year Elkanah and his family would go to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice the Lord.

And then the family would have a meal together. Well it sounds very nice doesn't it? It sounds like happy families. But no. But this meal became the arena of great distress for Hannah.

Elkanah would deal out portions of food to Peninnah and her children first. But then give a double portion to Hannah. Because he loved her. And this seemingly favorable treatment gave Peninnah the opening that she was looking for.

[12 : 26] To jab her elbow in the side of poor Hannah. You can just imagine loud mouthed Peninnah making a big show of things around the dinner table can't you? Saying things like this.

Now has everybody got their food? Children have you all got food? Have you all been fed? Oh it's just so hard to keep track of you all. There's just so many of you. Hannah I guess you wouldn't even understand what this is like.

Shame. And then one of Peninnah's no doubt lovely children pipes up. Mummy why doesn't Hannah have children of her own?

Peninnah replies. Oh I'm sure she would love to have children dear. And I'm sure daddy would love to have more children too. But you see Hannah she just keeps disappointing daddy.

She can't have children. Why says the little girl? Well because God won't let her. Now I'm not one to speculate why.

[13 : 26] But I'm sure you can reach your own conclusions on your own. It's horrible. Hannah was repeatedly barraged by these venomous and unwarranted attacks.

Notice year by year Hannah would go to worship God at Shiloh. Verse 3. And year by year verse 7. Peninnah would provoke her grievously.

The cruelty was as certain and as regular as Hannah's devotion was to the Lord. And of course this absolutely devastated Hannah.

If it wasn't bad enough not being able to have a child. The one thing that you desired above all else. Indeed what she rightly thought she was designed and created to do. It was made worse by the fact that she was mocked and demoralized by a rival.

Who seemingly had everything that she wanted. Tears flowed. Verse 7. And she couldn't eat. Even the best intended efforts of her husband.

[14 : 29] Couldn't bring her any comfort. Verse 8. Notice how many times Hannah's grief is mentioned in this opening chapter. She weeps and her heart is sad.

Verse 7. She's deeply distressed and wept bitterly. Verse 10. She was troubled in spirit and poured out her soul. Verse 15.

And she was in great anxiety and vexation. Verse 16. Hannah had hit breaking point. And implicitly we're asked the following question as the reader.

Where do you turn to when you've sunk to such levels of despair and hope seems to have gone? Where can hope be found? Well let's look at our first point for this evening.

When life is far from what you want it to be. You must turn to God who is sovereign and active. Turn to God who is sovereign and active.

[15 : 32] Peninnah jives that year with a straw that broke the camel's back. Elkanah's well intended but somewhat insensitive words in verse 8. Were no comfort to Hannah. So she races to the temple and weeps bitterly before the Lord.

Verse 10. She recognized that God was the only one who could bring her the comfort that she so desired. And also the only one who could reverse her fortunes.

If the Lord was the one who had closed up her womb. Verse 5. For reasons that she could not possibly comprehend. Then he was the only person who could open it again.

He is the all powerful God who is in charge of all of heaven's armies. That's what she names him. That's why she names him the Lord of hosts in her first prayer.

He has all the power of heaven at his disposal. And if you look near the end of her second prayer in chapter 2 verse 8. She proclaims this.

[16 : 34] The pillars of the earth are the Lord's. And on them he has set the world. God made the world. He established it. And therefore he has complete control over everything that happens in it.

From the rising and falling of nations. To the circumstances of a seemingly unimportant barren woman. Who barely registers on the stage of human history.

If you're desperate for your circumstances to change. If you're feeling afflicted. Then there is only one place to turn to.

And if we ever find ourselves disappointed at how our mission is going as a church. Then there's only one person we can turn to as well. For that is what the Old Testament church reading this letter.

Would have gleaned from this opening story. The people of Israel who read this years later. The books of Samuel are pretty hard to date.

[17 : 35] It's hard to know when they were written exactly. They could have been written any time between the dividing of the kingdom. Under Rehoboam. Just after Solomon's reign. All the way up through exile.

A period of around 400 years. So it's really difficult to apply this letter to a specific incident. Or specific incidents that were occurring at the time that this letter was written.

This book was written. For we don't know what incidents correlated with the time this book was written. But what was certain. Was that the glory days were now well and behind.

Well in the past for Israel. Israel had been at its greatest. Under King David and King Solomon. The Old Testament church of God had flourished.

And people from foreign lands from all over had come to inquire about Israel's God. Who had led them to prosper and flourish so greatly. But since then.

[18 : 30] Well things had gone severely downhill. And it would have been very tempting to have thought that God. Had perhaps lost control. Or that he perhaps wasn't interested in the welfare of his people anymore.

Or the circumstances that they found themselves in. But Hannah's story preached to them. That that simply couldn't be true. It's obvious from this story.

From the big turnaround. That he is in control. And he definitely cares. And is active in the world. In both their day and in our day to day. For it would be a problem wouldn't it.

If God was powerful. But utterly disinterested in our lives. Disengaged with the world and the people that he's made a covenant with. But Hannah's passionate prayers teach us that that isn't the case.

Why pray if you don't think God is interested. And notice what she prays in verse 11. O Lord of hosts. If you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant.

[19 : 33] And remember me. And not forget your servant. But will give to your servant a son. Then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life. And no razor shall touch his head.

You might think that Hannah's call for the Lord to remember her. And not to forget her. Shows her that she's in some way uncertain. About the character of her God.

And his willingness to act in her life. But rather. She's holding God to his word in faith. For these words echo the words at the very start of the book of Exodus.

Don't they? Do you remember how the book of Exodus started? The Israelite people were being afflicted in Egypt. And they cried out to the Lord to help them.

And this is what Moses the writer says in chapter 2. God heard their groaning. And God remembered. His covenant with Abraham.

[20 : 33] With Isaac and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel. And God knew. God remembered. Saw.

And knew. And as we know back then. He acted to turn around the fortunes of Israel. As they were miraculously rescued. From slavery. And brought into a land of their own.

Hannah knew that story. Hannah knew the character of her God. She knew he was powerful. And she knew that he wasn't far off and aloof. But rather intimately involved in the lives of his people.

And the history of this world. God cares. And that's why in chapter 2 verse 2. She proclaims this about him. What we've sung already. There is none holy like the Lord.

There is none beside you. There is no rock like our God. God is unique. There is none like him.

[21 : 33] He is not only uniquely powerful. But he's also uniquely the only one who can meet our cares and needs at the level that we so desire in this world.

Even the best of relationships. Spouses and friends. They can not meet our cares and our needs at the level that we so desire. There is none beside him.

There is no rock like him. And Hannah knew that. The Israelites living in less favorable days after the great kings needed to know this too.

And we need to know this as well. Turn to him. Nothing else in this world. No other coping strategy. No political movement. Is capable of helping us like the Lord.

God is uniquely qualified to work in our lives and change our circumstances. And he loves to turn around. Turn things around. As we'll see in a moment. So the second thing we need to do.

[22 : 34] If we expect God to act in our lives for the better is this. Serve our God. Who blesses the loyal. Serve our God. Who blesses the loyal.

It's hard to miss Hannah's devotion and service to the Lord in this chapter, isn't it? She goes to the temple year on year. She reveres the Lord.

Calling him the Lord of hosts. She makes vows to the Lord. Promises even to give up the son she desires above all else. To be good. To his service.

If he will answer her prayer. Verse 11. She will ensure that her son becomes a Nazarite. Dedicating him to the service of the Lord in his temple. And the interaction with Eli also works to display Hannah's godly character and loyalty too.

Eli sees Hannah distraught. Mouthing words. And he assumes that she's drunk. Presumably, I think, because probably at this time of year, everyone coming to Shiloh to worship and feast.

[23 : 39] Perhaps there were lots of people getting drunk. But not Hannah. The encounter gives the reader the chance to see what's going on in her heart. The depth of her intimacy with the Lord.

Her devotion to him. She wasn't drunk. But was busy pouring out her soul to the Lord. Verse 15. She describes herself as a servant of God.

Verse 16. Not a worthless woman. She's a loyal servant of God. And when Eli sees this, he has confidence that the Lord will indeed grant her petition.

Verse 17. For the Lord loves to bless those who humbly serve him and rely on him. Hannah knew that. Both Hannah and Eli knew Deuteronomy.

That God promised to bless those who were faithful to him and his covenant and curse those who weren't. And that's why the story turns at verse 18. Up until that point, there was only misery, heartache, and tears for Hannah.

[24 : 44] But from this moment on, there is no mention of grief at all. The writer simply says, Then the woman went on her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

Hannah could have confidence in her prayers because God loves to bless those who love him and serve him. And indeed, our God in heaven, the Lord of hosts, did indeed remember Hannah.

Verse 19. She conceived, and she bore a son, and she called him Samuel. And notice that her loyalty and devotion didn't stop when she got what she wanted.

That's what I'm tempted to do all the time. She may not have been able to go up to the temple of the Lord the following year because she was still weaning Samuel. Verse 22. But she was still concerned about fulfilling her vow.

Hannah's mind was infixed on bringing Samuel to appear in the presence of the Lord and for him to dwell there in the temple forever serving him. Verse 22. And when she had weaned him.

[25 : 52] Verse 24. That's exactly what she did. Read with me. She took him up with her along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flower, and a skin of wine.

And she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. And the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli.

And she said, She fulfilled her vow.

She gave up what was most precious to her, just as she had promised to do, that Samuel might serve the Lord. The author wants us to see that the Lord's blessing is inextricably linked with Hannah's loyalty to God.

And the message is that if we want God's love and serve him. And the message is that if we want God to be active in our lives, in our church life, then we must really love him and serve him. Now let me clarify what I'm not saying, because I can see a couple of you squirming.

[27 : 13] I am not endorsing salvation by works. Neither am I endorsing the prosperity gospel or some version of karma, that God blesses us proportionally in return for the service that we render him.

Any relationship we have with the Lord and any blessing in our lives flows from his divine benevolence towards us. We don't merit it. And that isn't just true of the initiation of that relationship when we become Christians, but true for all of our Christian lives.

But picture an earthly king with me. Not a modern day one, a powerful one like back in the days of the Old Testament.

Think Nebuchadnezzar or David or Solomon. Do you think they were keen to grant the requests of their subjects who are disloyal to them?

No. Kings don't bless those who rebel against them. They don't love to bless those who are in rebellion against them, but rather those who strive to serve them and their kingdom.

[28 : 22] And it's no different with the king, our God. You can't expect God to kindly bless your life, to reverse your circumstances, if you're living in absolute rebellion against him.

But neither does it mean that this works mechanistically. Just because we do serve God faithfully doesn't mean that everything will go well in our lives or in our church.

That's obvious, isn't it, from Hannah's example, Hannah's life. I presume she was barren for many years, despite being unswervingly faithful to the Lord. God hasn't just set up some kind of impersonal system to distribute blessing and curses in proportion to human faithfulness.

It's more nuanced and personal than that. But nonetheless, as a general rule of thumb, obedience to God and loyalty to him does usually bring blessing to our lives.

But one of the nuances that we need to appreciate is that, well, kings have the right to withhold blessings from those who deserve them due to higher purposes that citizens just do not understand or have privy to.

[29 : 35] And even give blessings to those who are undeserving the likes of Motormouth Penina, if it advances his kingdom purposes and brings him glory.

They are the king. They have prerogative. And their glory and the advance of their kingdom has to become before the happiness of their subjects.

And that's something, I think, that goes against the grain with how we feel today. We put happiness on a pedestal. We think life is all about us being happy.

Well, God says that actually the advance of his kingdom and his glory comes before our personal happiness as much as he loves to bless us. But let's not be lulled into a state of apathy by the fact that God does have prerogative to do as he wishes.

But let's do strive to become people and a church. But the Lord does love to bless because we love him and serve him and want to honor him. And if we are doing so, if we are living lives like that, if we are living like that together as a church, then we have every right to expect God to be at work in amongst us, transforming us and blessing us, answering our prayers.

[30 : 58] And finally, and quickly on this point, just to say, although Hannah saw a turnaround in her lifetime, we might never see a turnaround of our circumstances in this life, despite remaining loyal to the Lord.

But God will bring justice, perfect justice in the end. Those who are loyal to him now will one day experience unrelenting blessing in the new world.

And those who oppose him now will face unrelenting curses in the new world. It's worth remaining devoted to the Lord, though life remains hard, though dreams are not always realized this side of eternity.

It's worth remaining loyal to him, for it will be worth it in the end. Don't give up. Well, finally, and more succinctly, our last point for tonight.

If we want to experience blessing again, a turnaround in our lives, then we must hope in God who works through his chosen king. Hope in God who works through his chosen king.

[32 : 11] Look with me, if you will, to Hannah's prayer in chapter 2. As Willie said, it is quite remarkable. Hannah shows us how right she was to place all her hopes on God, as we've seen already.

She'd been downcast and despairing, but now she can say, verse 1, my heart exalts in the Lord, my strength is exalted in the Lord. God has turned everything on its head in an instant, like she trusted he would do.

Penina had derided her, ridiculed her, mocked her, but now she could deride Penina, verse 1. It was Penina who now looked ridiculous, and who should be pitied, not Hannah.

And then she offers this stern warning to those who would deride God's people, in verse 3. Those who seemingly have it all in his life, to those who feel secure and don't turn to God and thank him for the blessings he's poured out into their lives, unmeritedly.

She says, 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.

[33 : 29] It's a warning shot across the bows to Penina, but also a reminder to every Israelite years later that God sees what is happening.

He's a God of knowledge. Things might be going better in the nations all around Israel. Things might be going well for people out with God's Old Testament church, and they might even start to scoff at God's so-called chosen and favored people.

But don't worry. God sees. He knows. And he's weighing up all that is going on, and he can turn the situation on its head in a split second if he so desires.

And that might happen in our lifetime, or it might happen at the end of our lives. And he loves to do so, doesn't he? He loves to turn things around. Verses 4 to 9 make that so clear.

God loves to bring hope to those who love him and tear down the proud who deride and scoff at his people. Verse 4. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength.

[34 : 41] He gives strength to his weak people and makes weak those who appear strong that oppose his people. Verse 5. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.

The barren has born seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. Those who seem to be flourishing, well, they can quickly wilt.

And the fortunes of his people can quickly turn from disappointment to prosperity in an instance. Verse 6.

The Lord kills and brings to life. He brings down to Sheol and raises up. Such is the power of God to reverse human circumstances and reverse history.

He can even bring death to the seemingly sprightly and full of life and raise the stone cold dead. Verse 7. The Lord makes poor and makes rich.

[35 : 49] 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. Paul says, paupers can become princes and royalty can be ruined in an instant.

Verse 9. 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.

These are the words God's struggling people needed to hear back then and we need to hear them today too.

We can have a sure and certain hope because God loves to humble the proud and raise up the lowly. But Jesus reminds us of that, doesn't he, in the Sermon on the Mount?

[36 : 50] It's the meek who shall inherit the earth. But here comes the big change. Here comes the big challenge and the big surprise for God's people back then.

All these hopes for change, for prosperity and flourishing instead of struggle, would be pinned upon, hang upon, God's chosen king.

Future blessing for Israel would be channeled through an earthly king, so they must remain loyal to that king. And his dynasty, if they want things to go well, if they want that reversal of fortunes, read with me verse 10.

The Lord will judge the ends of the earth and he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed. At the point Hannah spoke these words, she would have known that God intended for Israel to have a king.

God had said such in chapter 17, verse 6 of Genesis to Abraham. He said that kings would come from Abraham's line.

[38 : 03] And Deuteronomy chapter 17, well, it has a whole section given instructions, the future kings of Israel. But Hannah wouldn't have known that her son, Samuel, would become the prophet to anoint kings in Israel.

And she wouldn't have known that God's covenant with Israel would have been realigned when Samuel anointed David as king and God promised to work exclusively through David's family, his dynasty, to advance his kingdom in this world and bring prosperity to his people.

However, the readers of 1 Samuel, they did know this promise. They did know that God had realigned his purposes to act through David's family.

But yet things had gone so sour in God's kingdom that they had started to question the legitimacy of these promises. David's sons had been absolutely disastrous for Israel.

Their failures had plagued Israel and brought great difficulty for God's people. I'm sure that there were many in Israel who attempted to establish a new royal family or turned to other means to find blessing for the reversal of their fortunes that they so desired, for sticking with David's dynasty, but it just didn't seem to be working for the people back then.

[39 : 27] How could God have pinned all hopes for the welfare and advance of his kingdom on such a disastrous family? It didn't look like any of the Davidic kings would be exalted or that they would judge the earth and bring a perfect rule of justice like verse 10 promises.

And those promises indeed were never fully realized, never came close to being realized in Israel's history before they went into exile. But the hopes of all God's people through all the ages were met in one from David's line.

God's covenant to David years later would be proven to be true and would finally be fulfilled. Jesus, David's greatest son, would come into this world not looking like much of a great king, not looking like someone you'd pin all your hopes on.

In fact, many people refused at the time, didn't they, to pin their hopes on him, especially when he was sentenced to death and crucified. But when he was raised from the dead, when he ascended to his father's right hand side in glory, we realized he became, he's the only earthly king that we can put our hopes in.

He rose victorious from the dead. He took his seat at God's right hand and now he rules all of earth and heaven perfectly as his kingdom advances throughout the world.

[41 : 01] Yes, things might look disappointing at times from our point of view. We cannot see Jesus, high, exalted, advancing his kingdom perfectly throughout the world.

It may appear that he's even unwilling or powerless to change our personal circumstances or our church circumstances. But he's God's chosen king on whom all the hopes of the world are pinned.

There is no one else that we can turn to. So if things do go bad, if you do feel afflicted in your personal life, or if things do go sour in our church, then there is nowhere else we can look to for help.

Only the Lord Jesus, risen and ascended and ruling supreme. And he loves to bless those who remain loyal to him throughout their struggles and disappointments in life.

And he may well bring a great reversal in our lives now if we have the boldness to ask him to, just like Hannah did. But if not, rest assured, our great king sees what we are facing.

[42 : 15] He knows. He will remember us, just like he did Hannah. And one day, when his kingdom extends to the ends of this earth, he will pour out unrelenting blessings on all his people who have endured hardship and disappointments and yet remain faithful to him right up until the end.

what a wonderful hope we have, both for our lives now and in the future. Let me pray for us.

Father God, we are so thankful that you are the rock.

You're the one person we can put all our hopes into. Thank you that you're not far off and distant. Thank you that you're not a leaf.

Thank you that you are intimately involved in the lives of your people. And we do just pray, Father, that you would make us a church who are loyal to you, just like Hannah, who have the boldness to ask of you things that we think might even be impossible.

[43 : 33] Help us, we pray, though life is full of disappointments and difficulties, not to turn to lesser things, not to turn to other things that cannot meet our cares and our needs as we so long to or have the power to change our circumstances.

Help us to keep trusting in the Lord Jesus that we cannot see him now. Thank you that one day we will see him risen, ascended, reigning supreme, and we will get to live in this perfect world where disappointments and tears are no more.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.