

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A Strange Way to Start Again

I Samuel 1:19-2:11

Intro: Our introduction into the remarkable life of Samuel began w/ a detailed description of his remarkable mother, Hannah. Last week, we witnessed the amazing transformation that occurred in her life. The 1st picture we see of her is of a depressed & desperate woman, stigmatized by her barrenness, made miserable by her rival, Hannah's soul is bitter & her prayers are in anguish. This didn't happen over night but was the result of many years of heartbreak & pain. At times like these, it's very easy 2 just give up, thinking that the situation will never change. 4 Hannah, every annual trip 2 Shiloh was exactly like the 1 b/4. Probably, the only change was the depth of pain she felt w/ each passing year. 1 evidence of her remarkable character was Hanna's ability 2 persevere amidst difficult circumstances. This is 1 of the keys 2 living by faith. Abraham believed God even after his & Sarah's bodies was long past the age of having children. He trusted in a God who, "**gives life 2 the dead & calls those things which do not exist as tho they did.**" (Rom 4:17b) Contrary 2 hope (physical), Abraham, in hope, believed. That's what faith is: **trusting w/o seeing.** Year after year, Hannah continued 2 suffer but, as a credit 2 her faith, she also continued 2 worship.

The most disturbing part of this whole account is the fact that **YHWH** had designed all of this (5b), "**the Lord had closed her womb.**" The painful path that Hannah had walked 4 years was, in fact, ordained by God! How can this be? In many ways, Hannah's experience closely parallels Israel's experience in the wilderness. **Deut 8:2-3** Here, Moses informs Israel that it was **YHWH** who'd "**led**" them into & ultimately thru the wilderness, it wasn't by accident. It was ordained by God that Israel **must** go thru the wilderness 2 get 2 the Promised Land & His purpose 4 this was 3-fold: 1) 2 **humble** them; 2) 2 **test** them; 3) 2 **know** what was in their heart. The situation Hannah faced & the difficult trials we may experience are 4 the same 3 reasons. 1st: 2 bring **humility**. God humbles us 2 teach us **total dependence** on Him (**Deut 8:3b**), "**that He might make you know...**" It took Israel 40yrs 2 learn this lesson. God's original plan was 2 bring Israel thru the wilderness quickly, but their lack of faith & trust extended the experience to a withering 40 yrs. Maybe this is why Hannah's ordeal lasted so long. But, when she eventually reached the point of total surrender 2 God, she was able 2 move on & leave the wilderness behind, but only after she came 2 the end of herself.

Oftentimes, it's only after we've exhausted our strength & every other option available 2 us that we're willing 2 let go & surrender 2 God. The wilderness teaches us that **we don't have the resources 2 cope w/ life on our own.** It's only after we've exhausted all of our resources that we can truly see the power of God at work in our lives. Why's that? B/c that's where God likes 2 begin – whether in creation or just dealing w/ His people, God likes 2 begin w/ **nothing!** He likes 2 make our **total inability** His starting point. When His people are w/o strength, resources, hope or human gimmicks, God loves 2 stretch out His hand from heaven & do a mighty work. Once we recognize where God likes 2 begin, we will understand how, like Hannah, we can be encouraged in the midst of our difficulties.

2nd purpose: 2 **test** our faith- will we believe God in the face of overwhelming odds or "unending" difficulties? Will we continue 2 follow Christ even when we are suffering disappointment after disappointment? 2 call this **unfair** is 2 misunderstand both God & His purpose. Moses says the purpose of God's humbling & testing is "**2 do you good in the end**" (16b). Faith must be exercised 2 grow stronger & strong faith pleases God & He will do good 4 you.

3rd: 2 **know** what's in our hearts- the wilderness either reveals a heart of pride & rebellion or a soft heart that bends 2 the Master's will. It will either make us bitter or better. Ironically, Hannah's bitterness actually made her better! Why? B/c she humbled herself, she clung 2 God in hope & ultimately, she was strengthened in her faith.

Hannah's breakthru comes b/c she finally realizes there's more 2 the situation than her personal pain. She begins 2 see that there's something more important than her trial – the glory of God! If God's purpose 4 the wilderness is "**2 do you good in the end**" then God can work in the midst of her affliction 4 the greater good. The breakthru comes when Hannah starts 2 ask, "**How can God be glorified in this situation?**" Now she understands that the son she has longed 4 these many years is actually intended 4 more than just covering her shame, more than fulfilling her expectations. If she gives him back 2 God then God can be glorified & God's people can be blessed. It's **this** realization (coupled w/ Eli's blessing - vs17) that allows her 2 return 2 the feast & 4 the 1st time in many years, sit down & really enjoy it.

19- **worshiped** –What does it mean? 2 **bow down**. 1st appears in **Gen 22**, Abe's called 2 **sacrifice** Isaac. Clearly, the meaning involves much more than just prostrating b/4 an altar. We call this our Sunday Worship Service but there's much more 2 worship than singing, praying, preaching & fellowship. In fact, none of those things are worship, merely an outward expression of it. 2 worship God= 2 bow down 2 His will, recognizing & acknowledging that His will is best. Thru-out OT, we see that true worship always involves sacrifice. Now, not all sacrifice = worship; athletes sacrifice many things but this is done in order 2 win, 2 receive the glory of victory. 2 truly worship the Lord, there must be a sacrifice on our part – sacrificing our will, expectations, abilities & trusting the goodness of His will & accepting it, even tho it may involve waiting, suffering or even dying. If it's His will we must bow down & accept it w/ thanksgiving. Its then & only then that we truly **worship** the Lord – **in spirit & in truth**. Worship was a **characteristic** of this family!

20- **Samuel**- it doesn't say how much time has passed but it appears 2 have happened w/in the following year. Hannah's multitude of prayers have finally been answered but in her rejoicing, she hasn't forgotten God's hand in it.

Samuel lit.= *his name is el* (God) but it appears she uses a play on the Hbr word 4 heard (*sama*) & God (*el*) 2 indicate that her request 4 a son was “heard of God.” No son in Israel who was ever more prayed over than Samuel.
21-23- est.- Hannah hadn’t forgotten God’s work in giving her a son nor her promise 2 give her son back 2 God, in fact, she was preparing 4 it. Surprisingly, Elkanah was also in agreement w/ her vow. Num 30 says that if a woman makes a vow 2 the Lord, her husband could annul it if he doesn’t agree w/ it; Elkanah refuses 2 annul Hannah’s vow. This means both he & Hannah were giving up their son as a living sacrifice 2 the Lord. This was no blithe surrender. When we consider how much Jacob loved Joseph, simply b/c he was the 1st son of his favorite wife (despite having plenty other sons) we begin 2 understand the depth of the sacrifice these 2 believers were actually facing!

24-28- young- crunch time! It’s 1 thing 2 promise the world in the heat of the moment but quite another 2 deliver the goods. Hannah’s now ready – for 3-4 yrs, she’s tried 2 impart her faith, her vow, into Samuel young mind. She knew his birth was miraculous & she surmised that his life would be equally so. She’s prepared him as much as she could, now it’s time 4 Samuel 2/b be turned over into the capable hands of **YHWH**, 2/b used 4 His glory!

lent- not in the sense of borrowing but of surrendering. Hannah sees Samuel as a gift from **YHWH** & she gratefully places that gift fully into **YHWH**’s hands. What’s true of Hannah is true 4 every believing parent: all of our children are on loan from the Lord & we have been given stewardship over them & we will each give an account 2 the Lord 4 their lives. Again, ultimately a kids going 2 do what a kids going 2 do, but as parents, we’ll have 2 answer 4 what we did or didn’t do in guiding our kids 2 the Lord. But beyond this truth, there’s a greater principle involved here. **God’s gifts should be given back 2 Him**. We correctly recognize God’s provision by using His gifts 2 us 4 His glory!

worshipped- Amazingly, even in the face of so great a sacrifice, they can still worship the Lord (like never have b/4). Hannah could have gone off alone & cried her eyes out but instead, she broke out in a song of praise 2 the Lord!

2:1-2- rejoices- how can she be joyful at a time like this? B/c the focus of her joy was **in the Lord**, not in Samuel. She rejoiced in the Giver more than in the gift. It wasn’t that she didn’t love her son, how could she not; but she looked beyond her own desires & expectations & saw a greater purpose, a divine plan 2 do good 4 an entire nation.

smile- she may have Penninah in mind here but this isn’t impertinence or smiling b/c she’s blessed but she’s able 2 smile b/c the Lord will bring His **salvation** regardless of what man may do against it! She rejoices in **YHWH**’s salvation, not in giving birth. She knows there are greater things going on in the world than just her problems. She also knows that thru her faith in & sacrifice 2 **YHWH**, He can begin 2 bring about His salvation in Israel w/ just **1 man**.

This is Hannah’s confession of faith & the insight she has here is nothing short of amazing so early in Israel’s history.

holy- wholly other, completely set apart, unique. There is only creation & the Creator; God & that which is not God.

rock- **YHWH**’s the stable strength in Hannah’s life. His character never changes & His promises never fail. She moves from her own **personal experience** (1) & **confession of faith** (2) 2 **a warning** 4 all the self-confident boasters...

3- knowledge- God’s omniscient & knows all things & He’s omnipresent & sees all things. Thus, He’s able 2 justly & accurately judge our actions. He weighs our motives & our hearts & His scales are precise. We may be misunderstood & maligned by the world around us but the Lord will always act justly, both towards us & 4 us!

4-8a- Note how everything gets turned on its head – these are the actions of a gracious, sovereign God. This is how God likes 2 operate: He makes - the impossible possible; the improbable a reality; the unlikely 2 happen! What God did 4 Hannah is what He has done 4 us in the past & desires 2 do 4 us again everyday.

8b-10a- Hannah’s eyes are moving from the temporal 2 the eternal, from the physical world 2 the divine purposes. God’s established the world so that it can’t be moved & what happens in it is under His constant, watchful care.

guard- the Lord superintends the feet of each 1 who loves Him. He guards their path & guides their feet! But 4 those who reject & resist Him, there’s no hiding place (**Ps 2**). 1 day the storm of God’s wrath will burst upon this world in fierce judgment. God is longsuffering 2 those who resist Him but this will not last forever; their day is coming.

10b- anointed- but there is no king! Here’s the final evidence of Hannah’s “eternal” viewpoint: even while there was no king in Israel, she looked 4 the coming of God’s promised King, the **anointed** 1- **mashiyach= Messiah!** 1st place in Bible this title is used & is subsequently picked by David, OT prophets & NT apostles as a designation of Jesus!

11- ministered- age appropriate 2/b sure. He wasn’t out slaughtering bulls, most likely scholarship was primary at 1st!

Many times we end up in the wilderness b/c of our own stubbornness, foolishness or out-right rebellion. Regardless of how we got there, **while** we’re there, God’s going 2 allow the experience 2 humble us, test us & reveal our hearts (not 2 Him but 2 us). While all of this may be uncomfortable or even down-right painful, we must know that its 4 our good. “Ok, so how is this encouraging?” Well, if this is how God works in His people then at the lowest points of our Christian walk, we should have a logical expectation of seeing God do a similarly amazing work **in our own lives** – but only **if** we have been sufficiently humbled & have drawn intimately closer 2 Him in our pain, not further from Him.

Is your worship characterized by sacrifice? In what way? Time? Talents? Realistically, all that matters is that U bow down 2 God’s will completely over your own. If U do that, these other things won’t be a sacrifice, they’ll be a joy!

If you've never accepted Christ as Savior, U really need 2 consider it. In Hannah's prayer, she mentioned many realities in life, both positive & negative. W/o Jesus, all U have 2 look forward 2 are the negatives. Like she said, God knows all, sees all & will judge accordingly w/ full justice & complete accuracy. How can you escape that? Just know that God has already executed His just judgment against your sin on Jesus Christ while He was on the cross. But, you don't get the benefit of that forgiveness unless you accept JC as your Savior. Once you do that you automatically move from the negative side of the equation 2 the positive. You see, long b/4 Hannah made her vow 2 give up her son 2 the Lord, God had already given up His Son as the sacrifice 4 the sin of the whole world. His blood is the only thing that can wash away your sins. Will you accept this forgiveness today?

