

Keynotes from Steven Drivers pm Sermon on 9/1/2022

1 Samuel 2 verses 1-10 Series: "The real King" Part 2"

"Who do you think you're talking to?"

Scripture references from the ESV

1 Samuel 2:1-10 And Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD.

My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. ² "There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God. ³ 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. ⁴ The bows of the mighty are broken,

but the feeble bind on strength. ⁵ 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. ⁶ The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷ The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. ⁸ 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 pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world. 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. ¹⁰ 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 horn of his anointed."

Prayer can feel frustrating and pointless for many of us at times. It can feel as if the God we are talking to has no power to do anything. The whole exercise seems a waste of time. That might even be how you feel about prayer meetings! For many professing Christians, prayer is perceived as at best, a duty and at worst, pointless. Rather than being a means by which we feel closer to God, it makes us feel more distant from him.

How do we change our perception of prayer? Over the next two weeks, Hannah's prayer, a prayer that came from a seemingly inconsequential

woman, but which has resounded through the ages, will help us change our perception of the God to whom we are praying.

At this point, Israel had no king. A series of judges had led the nation, but with each judge the country descended further into chaos and disorder. However, the problem didn't lie in the fact that they had no king. It lay in the fact that they had rejected the King they should have been looking to. They had lost their vision of who God is. Thousands of years later, that same challenge is ours. Do we have a right vision of God? Could it be that it is not so much our perception of prayer that is wrong but rather our perception of God, and this is reflected in our attitude to prayer.

When we pray to God, we need to know the God we are speaking to.

In Hannah's prayer, we see how she starts with something intimate and personal to her, and then expands it out again and again until we get a vision of God that will transform our prayers from ones that frustrate to ones that delight. Hannah shows us that prayer is not boring, mundane or pointless, but a means of grace that is full of joy and intimacy, drawing us close to God, whilst at the same time causing us to wonder at him on a cosmic level.

Who are we speaking to?

1. We are speaking to the God who is involved in all things (v1 above).

Hannah is rejoicing in what the Lord has done specifically in her situation. As we saw in the first part of this series, she came to God with nothing (1 Samuel 1:10-20 see p4) and poured out her soul to him. In his sovereignty, he provided her with a son, showing her that she had a part in his great salvation plan for humanity. She saw how God responded to her plea and turned her life upside down – one of many reversals in her prayer:

- Her heart is no longer downcast but rather is overwhelmed with joy
- Her horn is exalted, and she is now made strong where once she was weak.
- Her joy and strength are found in God and are far greater than anything that is found in earthly pleasures.

She has seen this micro-salvation and she is rejoicing in it.

What happened to Hannah shows us that **God is a personal God, who is intimately involved in the daily lives of his people.** He has the power to reverse any situation. If you know Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, there has already been a reversal in your life:

- You are no longer a slave to sin and excluded from the purposes of God
- Through Jesus, you are now claimed as a citizen of his kingdom, designed to live life in all its fulness, strengthened by the Spirit and finding joy in your heavenly Father

We can come to our Father with everything that life has thrown at us, no matter how small, knowing that it is his providence and he is already involved in it. We don't need to exclude anything from our prayers. We can bring it all to our Father and rejoice in him. **Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thess 5:16-18).**

How do we pray without ceasing? Simply bring what is going on in our lives before God in quick, simple prayers as we go through our day, constantly communing with him. Sometimes we overthink prayer!

When we recognise that God is involved all things and works through all things, it is logical that the outcome would be that we rejoice in his provision and rely on his provision, bringing everything before him in prayer. Trusting in his sovereignty means we are able to pray confidently and passionately when bigger situations occur.

We can have confidence in who we are talking to.

2. We are speaking to the God who is above all things (v2 above)

Hannah now takes her own personal situation and starts to expand her view of God, drawing out his characteristics and applying what she finds across the whole of creation. The reason he is involved in all things is that he is above all things. God is the true sovereign of the universe, far above any human king. He sees things from a higher view and we need to remember this, as also did Israel.

- There is none holy like the Lord – no other being is as set apart, sacred or above all things as God is

- There is none beside him – God is incomparable and way beyond our ability to describe
- There is no rock like our God – he is entirely stable and quite unfazed by what is going on in the world

God is steadfast and secure in his perfect holiness and incomparability. He does not change, or feel driven to change his plans, because of what is happening in the world. What is true for Hannah is true throughout scripture and for us today.

We may hear it said that God's word needs to be adapted to fit with how the world is today, but that is not possible. God does not change (he is the rock) and therefore what he has put in his word does not change. Trying to change scripture redefines God by our endlessly changing standards, and results in making oneself God, as we see happening today in so many ways.

When we know that the God, we are praying to is incomparable, unchangeable and holy, we can rest assured that our prayers are not going to some god or king who may base their answer on a whim, or on their mood at the time.

Our prayers will be answered according to God's almighty, never-changing character and purposes.

- When we pray, we can have confidence that God will answer us in the same way that he has answered all those who have gone before us, following his perfect will.
- Whatever the answer is, and it could be no, we can find joy in that, having the assurance that the answer will be according to his holy character and his holy purposes.

3. We are speaking to the God who knows all things (v3 above)

When we talk of God's holiness and his sovereignty, we can sometimes get a picture of a God who is distant from us, so that it is a one-way relationship. Reading v3 might confirm that view, but Hannah surrounds her statement with a warning against pride and arrogance which are the fruits of a sinful heart. Hannah tells us here that

God not only knows the actions carried out by people, but he also knows the motivation of every action.

God knows our hearts and what makes us tick even better than we know ourselves. This is not a one-way relationship. Where we can only gaze in awe at him, he knows us through and through. He is the only one who has the right to judge and to weigh any action, because only he knows the heart behind them.

We might hear of someone doing a great charitable deed and judge them to be a good person based on that, but God can see past the surface to the sinful heart behind it.

When we have this vision of God, we can know that God knows every situation intimately and far better than we do. You might think you know everything when you bring your prayers to him, but he is not only already aware of what you are telling him about, he knows **everything** about it. Whatever you tell him is not going to shock him!

- He knows the hidden motivations in the people we deal with, the pain we are going through, the problems at work, the trouble with the family member and indeed all our struggles.
- He even knows the sins hidden in our lives that we are too ashamed to talk about.

When we realise that God already knows, we can come to him with everything., even those things we want to hide.

Knowing that he already knows means that we can speak freely with him.

Prayer is a means of grace, because we can be open with him in a way that we can't be with anyone else. There is no point in hiding.

We can lay bare our souls to our God who knows us intimately, casting our burdens on to him.

The fact that he knows our situation better than we do means that we can know that his answer to any prayer will always be perfect and true. It may not be the answer we wanted, but it will be the perfect answer.

We need a bigger vision of the God we are speaking to, knowing that he is involved in all things, praying to him about all things, seeing him as above all things.

What a difference it makes to your prayer life when:

- you realise that you are praying to your real King. Then you will pray knowing our King will answer.
- you see him as all-knowing. Then you can pray to him openly and honestly.

Your prayer life will start to be transformed even at this point, and as we continue through Hannah's prayer, your vision of God will enlarge still further.

**Take time now to rejoice in what you have already discovered about your sovereign King,
and over this coming week, be praying that you will know God better,
that you will know his providence and his sovereignty and that you will know that he knows you.**

1 Samuel 1:10-20 After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. ¹⁰ She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. ¹¹ 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."¹² As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." ¹⁵ But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. ¹⁶ Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." ¹⁷ Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." ¹⁸ And she said, "Let your servant find favour in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. ¹⁹ They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the

LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰And 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."