Portrait Of A Godly Mother
1 Samuel 1:1-28

Introduction

Edward Gibbon, author of The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire; wrote “Man writes histories; goodness is silent. History is, indeed, little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind.”

Gibbon wrote The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire in 1788; shortly after the United States won its freedom and shortly after writing its Constitution. Gibbon gave five reasons why civilizations wither and die.

1. An undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home; which is the basis for human society.
2. Higher and higher taxes, and spending public money for free bread and circuses for the populace (the switch to digital TV).
3. A mad craze for pleasure, with pastimes becoming every year more exciting, brutal, and immoral.
4. Building great armaments, although the real enemy was within--the decay of individual responsibility.
5. Decay of religion--faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life and losing power to guide the people.

Dr. A.T. Pierson wrote; preacher and missionary wrote; “History is His story”.

There is a re-occurring theme found in the Bible and certainly in the books of Samuel; nations may change, leaders may change, but the plan God and the purpose of God remains the same and continues to move forward.

The book of Judges describes a time when there was no king and every one did what was right in his own eyes. Samuel was the last great judge. Israel was not so much a united country as a united group descended from one man Jacob; a nation of tribes; who were governed by Judges who were appointed by God. There was no standing army or permanent military leaders. Leaders from the different tribes would volunteer when the nation was threatened.

The first three chapters of 1 Samuel introduces us two three main characters; a godly mother named Hannah; a careless Father named Eli and a devoted son named Samuel.

The book of I Samuel chronicles the last judge (chapters 1-12) and the first king (chapters 13-31). The book begins with Samuel gaining the public trust and ends with the public completely disillusioned with Saul the new King.

We find Jesus in the book 1 Samuel; typified in Samuel-as prophet, priest and judge; and later in the life of David; the shepherd who becomes king; born in Bethlehem.
The book of Samuel describes a nation in transition. The people in Israel were in big trouble. They lacked godly leadership. The priesthood was defiled; there was little revelation; that is limited prophetic messages coming from the Lord (see 3:1) and the Word of God, the Law of Moses was largely being ignored.

Over and over again God solves the problem by sending a baby; babies have been called God’s vote of confidence; babies are God’s way of saying; I know what you need; I care about you; and I am willing to work on your behalf. When a baby comes, hope comes, babies are our arrows into the future, and their conception and birth are linked to the miracle power of God. The Lord God sometimes selects barren women to be pictures of hope; to Sarah the Lord gives Isaac; Jacob and Esau to Rebekah; and Joseph to Rachel.

The book of Samuel outlines Hannah’s journey from sorrow to supplication to surrender.

Hannah’s Sorrow (vv.1-10)

1 Samuel 1:1; Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.

Samuel’s father appears to have been a priest; even though he lives in the region of Ephraim. We know that Elkanah was a priest because of the genealogy of Samuel (I Chron. 6:25-27). The family was of the Kohathite branch of the tribe of Levi.

Ramathaim Zophim is another name for Ramah; a town about five miles north of Jerusalem (v. 19). Ramath was not one of the priestly cities originally assigned to the tribe of Levi; but for some reason a branch of the tribe moved to the hill country of Ephraim.

1 Samuel 1:2; And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

The Law allowed for more than one wife (see Deut.21:15-17). God’s perfect plan and pattern for the family was to be one man and one woman; but Moses permitted divorce “because of the hardness of men’s hearts” (Matt. 19:8). I am going to suggest to you that this was not a good thing. It was not uncommon for a man to take a second wife when the first wife could not bear children.

Why didn’t Elkanah wait on the Lord and trust the Lord?

Remember Abraham took Hagar (bad thing); and Jacob ended up with four wives!
The name “Hannah” means grace; or the woman of grace.

The fact that Peninnah had children meant at least on the surface that the problem seemed to lie with Hannah. How is it that a woman with Peninnah’s cruel disposition could have children but Hannah could not? Why had the Lord shut up her womb? Whatever the reason; God was going to use the time of barreness to mold her character; to motivate her faith; and to bring her to a place where she was willing to give what was best to the Lord.

Karen Lee- Thorp *The Story of Stories* transitions from Ruth to 1 Samuel this way:

*About the time Ruth and Boaz were happily raising Obed, another wife was suffering the curse of barrenness less than thirty miles north. Her husband’s other wife teased her to the point that Hannah was praying desperately for a baby. When Yahweh finally gave her a son, she was so grateful that she dedicated him to serve at the tabernacle as soon as he was about three years old. She gave him into the care of Eli, the priest in charge.*

Hannah grew up in a world where society had sunk to its lowest depths; there was rampant lawlessness, abuse, violence, a permissive life-style, gang-rape, homosexuality, spousal abuse, child abuse, murder, widespread polygamy, greed, injustice, idolatry, civil war.

But there were a few people who served the Lord. In a very real sense Samuel would be born into a imperfect family; one that struggled to honor and serve the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:3; *This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there.*

The Tabernacle and the Ark were located in Shiloh at this time. Jewish men were required to observe three major festivals each year. During the times of the Judges, when so many people were not honoring God and living lives of immorality and rebellion, I suspect the services were not that well attended.

I think the mention of Hophni and Phinehas goes to the issue of hypocrisy and inconsistency in the worship. We find these two young men were crass hypocrites; but Elkanah does not use their blatant hypocrisy as an excuse; but rather continues to honor and serve the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:4; *And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters.*

1 Samuel 1:5; *But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb.*
Hannah carried a constant burden, an ever present sorrow. The burden and sorrow was deeply rooted in her inability to conceive and have children and the constant persecution from the other wife. The persecution was most severe during the times of “worship”.

Elkanah attempted to comfort his wife, but she would not be comforted. The anguish, the sorrow, the pain, only seemed to deepen. She would not be consoled. She was gripped by a sense of sorrow and brokeness, by helplessness and hopelessness; did she feel she was cursed by God? Did she blame her husband? Did she believe she had failed God or her husband?

There are so many people living their lives in quite and not so quite desperation.

Almost everyone has experienced a broken heart. Almost everyone has experienced some failure or disappointment, or disillusionment. It may come from a failed relationship, inability to conceive or bear children, disease, injury, loss of a loved one; just as Hannah suffered deep from the pain and agony of trials and helplessness, and hopelessness of circumstances.

Ecclesiastes 2:17; Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

Psalm 42:6; O my God, my soul is cast down within me;

Isaiah 49:14; But Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me.

Ephesians 2:12; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

1 Samuel 1:9; So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the Lord.

Hannah’s Supplication (vv.11-19)
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1 Samuel 1:11; Then she made a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.

In a divided home---Hannah determined to pray.

Hannah makes a vow and calls the Lord the Lord of Hosts (YHWH Sebaot). This is the first time the Lord is called the Lord of hosts or armies. The term stresses the sovereignty, rule and supremacy of God; His ultimate leadership.

1 Samuel 1:12; And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth.

1 Samuel 1:13; Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk.

1 Samuel 1:14; So Eli said to her, How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!

1 Samuel 1:15; But Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:16; Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now.

1 Samuel 1:17; Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him.

1 Samuel 1:18; And she said, Let your maidservant find favor in your sight. So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

It is an amazing thought that the future of the nation rested in the godly prayers of a godly mother. How often has history turned on faithful women remaining faithful to the Lord?

1 Samuel 1:19; Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her.

Hannah’s Surrender (vv.20-28)

1 Samuel 1:20; So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked for him from the Lord.
The Hebrew word *sa-al* means “asked” and *sama* means “heard”. El means God and so the name means “heard of God” or asked of God. All his life--Samuel was both an answer to prayer and a great man of prayer.

*I Samuel 1:21;* Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow.

Jewish Law permitted a husband to make void or annul a wife’s vow if he disagreed with it (see Numbers 30).

*I Samuel 1:22;* But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, Not until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the Lord and remain there forever.

Elkanah agrees with his wife’s decision; he allows her to stay home and wean the child. It is also remarkable that a husband and father would agree to be separated from his son for most of their lives. A firstborn son had to be redeemed by sacrifice (see Exodus 13:11-13). The couple were giving their son--a sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel as a Levite--and Nazirite--prophet and judge--would faithfully serve the Lord and help bring in a new era in Jewish history.

Mothers would usually wean their children at about age three; and this mother taught her son to honor and obey the Lord. Clearly Samuel does not know the Lord until later when the Lord speaks to him (see chapter 3:7-10).

*I Samuel 1:23;* So Elkanah her husband said to her, Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him. Only let the Lord establish His word. Then the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

*I Samuel 1:24;* Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young.

There is some debate whether the text says three bulls or a three year old bull (NIV; NASB). The fact that the parents bring an ephah of meal or flour and a skin of wine--would suggest three bulls; for three-tenths of ephah of grain was needed for each bull sacrificed (see Numbers 28:12).

The point is--they brought what was necessary to worship the Lord.

*I Samuel 1:25;* Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli.

Hannah brought two sacrifices to the tabernacle that day--a bull for slaughter and a son for service.
She offered both with a heart full of gratitude and joy; because God had turned her barren womb into a place of blessing. That is exactly what the Lord does—He moves our lives to a place of barrenness to blessing.

The Lord God arranged for Samuel to be a blessing to others; his life would be a life of service to the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:26; And she said, O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the Lord.

Did Eli remember? We are not told.

1 Samuel 1:27; For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him.

It must have taken amazing faith; and real courage to leave their son with Eli. Eli seems to have had a very low level of spiritual perception; and his sons are clearly wicked. Yet we must be careful; because Samuel’s sons later are not what we would call paragons of virtue.

Clearly the Lord was with Samuel; and clearly the Lord protected him and preserved him from the corruption and the pollution. God protected Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses!

Judgment to Eli and his sons; but God would prepare Samuel to lead a nation.

1 Samuel 1:28; Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord. So they worshiped the Lord there.

Conclusion

When your home is divided; determine to pray.

The story makes clear that the life and the future of the nation—was bound to the character and spiritual life of the parents.

There is an African proverb that says; “the ruin if a nation begins in the homes of its people”; and Confucius taught; “The strength of a nation is derived from the integrity of its homes.” Eli and his sons had “religious” homes that were godless, but Elkanah and Hannah had a godly home that honored the Lord, and they gave Him their best.

Never underestimate the power of the home or the power of a little child dedicated to God (see Warren Wiersbe; Old Testament History; p.210)