

In The Course Of Time

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Today we are going to be studying from the book of 1 Samuel 1 beginning at the first verse. This is the NIV version. There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb.

Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?" Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's temple. In bitterness of soul, Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. She made a vow saying, "Oh, Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me. And not forget your servant, but give her a son. That I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine." "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer. I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman, I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went on her way and ate something. Her face was no longer downcast. Early the next morning they arose, and worshipped before the Lord, and then went back to their home in Ramah. Elkanah lay with his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son.

I want to focus on that 20th verse of 1 Samuel 1. *So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son.* That is the NIV version. The King James version says: *Wherefore it came to pass when the time was come.* The New King James version says: *So it came to pass in the process of time.* The New Living Translation

says: *And in due time she gave birth to a son.* The topic today: In The Course Of Time.

Hannah had been troubled because she had her rival; which was the other wife. Who was basically ridiculing her because she could not have children. The interesting thing about this...the word of God said "And the Lord had shut up her womb." She could have no children because God had shut her womb. Yet, Hannah was to the point where she was crying and couldn't eat because her rival, this woman was just messing with her. Have you ever had anybody who was just messing with you? It had her so distraught, downcast, crying and full of anguish. And yet, behind it all it was God who had shut her womb.

The bible says that after she made the pledge to give the child back to God, and basically put him under the Nazirite vow (that is what no razor shall touch his head meant). After all of that, God still says: "In the course of time." It wasn't even instant. In the course of time, Hannah received the blessing and God opened up her womb so that she could conceive Samuel. In the course of time. Some of us right now, we are in the midst of in the course of time. You are like Hannah, praying out and hollering to God, "Lord, when!" See, first of all Lord, I am doing the right thing by you. I am coming up here to the temple. I am making the pilgrimage. I am making the sacrifice Lord. I am faithful to my husband Lord. I am doing all of this stuff Lord! And yet, you have blessed my rival Peninnah. You have blessed that woman. [Some of you would not have even used the word "woman".] You have blessed that woman, and yet you have me barren. Why?

Why Lord? When are you going to relieve my anguish Lord? When are you going to give me some relief Lord? Why are you blessing them and you haven't blessed me? First of all, in the course of time we often will focus on what we don't have. Now most of the time, the women wanted the children so they could please the man, and look good in the man's eye. Hannah's husband said "Look woman, I am giving you a double portion of everything. I am only giving Peninnah half of what I am giving you. Don't you see that?!" Nope, I don't see that. The only thing I see is the stuff I am missing. I don't see that you are giving me double what you are giving her. With Peninnah the bible only tells Hannah's side of the story. Peninnah most likely had a side of the story too. Peninnah might have said "Lord, that woman! My husband is giving that woman double what I am getting, and she hasn't even given him any children; and he is giving her double what I am getting!

There was a reason why Peninnah was her rival, and there was a reason why Peninnah was upsetting her. You have never heard Peninnah's side. Peninnah was upset because the husband should have had sense enough to give both of them even portions. The man should have known if you give one wife double what you give the other wife, the wife who is getting the half will have an issue with that. Hannah didn't see that, and the husband was trying to tell her "Woman don't you see all I

have given you.” For those of you right now waiting on something that you are missing, that you are barren with that you want so bad...don’t you recognize what God has already given you? Don’t you know that even though there are some things that you may think you are missing, someone else is looking at you and thinking “Why do they have all of that?” “Why has God blessed them with so much?” “Why are they so prosperous?” “Why? Why? Why?”

If you only knew Peninnah’s side. And yet, God answered Hannah’s prayer, but he only answered her prayer in the course of time. In the course of time. One of the most famous verses in scripture is Isaiah 40:31. It says: *They that wait upon the Lord, [oh, we know that verse], shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.* The part we gloss over is “they that wait”. We will glorify the “wings of eagles” and “we will run and not get weary”. We gloss over the “wait” part. They that wait. We don’t like to wait today, because this is not a waiting society. Everything that we have now is instant and fast. That is why no one writes letters anymore because it is called what kind of mail? Snail mail! No one wants snail mail. People want stuff faster and faster.

I want you to just try an experiment. Just sit at a red light and let it turn green, and notice how long it takes for somebody to blow their horn behind you. Sometimes I have been sitting at the light, and the light just popped green; it looked like when the light turned green somebody was on their horn. Folk are just impatient! We have instant grits, microwave and instant oatmeal. We have fast food. Everything now...this generation, this society is geared to speed, but the human spirit has never changed. We have never wanted to wait on God. That is why Isaiah says, “Those that wait upon the Lord”.

[Pastor Nathaniel shows a slide of the growth of a Chinese Bamboo tree.]

This is Chinese Bamboo. The Chinese Bamboo tree is one of the most remarkable plants on earth. Once the gardener plants the seed, he sees nothing but a single small shoot coming out of the bulb for five full years. That tiny shoot however, must have a daily food and water supply. During all the time the gardener is caring for the plant, the exterior shoot grows less than one inch. At the end of five years however, the Chinese Bamboo will perform an incredible feat. It will grow an amazing 90 feet tall in only 90 days. You see the chart of what happens on day five. After that five years it is eight inches tall. On day nine it is 18 inches tall. On day 12 it is three feet tall. On day 15 it is five feet tall. On day 18 it is nine feet. And by the time it gets to day 23 it is 22 feet tall. In 90 days it grows 90 feet tall. Yet, ask yourself this: “When did the tree actually grow?” During the first five years or during those last 90 days?

The answer lies in the unseen part of the tree...the underground root system. During the first five years, the fibrous root structure spreads deep and wide in the

earth preparing to support the incredible heights the tree will eventually reach. In the course of time. Sometimes God can't give you what you want right now, because you can't handle it. Your root system is not big enough. You are not grounded enough, and if God gave some of you what you wanted right now...the weight and the pressure of that thing...because you are not grounded enough...will blow you over and destroy you. That is why God has to orchestrate everything in the course of time. Do you want to be an oak or a mushroom?

We have right now some wet weather. Mushrooms spring up overnight, and they come up almost big. One day the ground is clean, and you go out two days later and there are some big mushrooms out there. Mushrooms are fast growing, but they are soft and weak. To grow an oak takes much longer, but it is a much stronger and much sturdier tree. So, do you want to be a mushroom or an oak? To be an oak of a person, you have to go through the course of time.

A little boy was fishing and he hadn't caught anything. A man came by and asked the little boy: "Are you fishing little boy?" The little boy replied back: "No, I am not fishing. I am just drowning worms." Sometimes we feel that way. We have been casting out and reeling up. Have you ever been fishing, and you are just casting down and reeling up? You are casting down and reeling up. The problem sometimes when you cast down and reel up is that you feel the fish biting, and you come up and have nothing because they have stolen your worm. We feel that way sometimes in life that we are just fishing, and that all we are doing is drowning worms.

Hannah felt that way. The bible said that year after year after year...nothing but a nagging woman on her back about why she was barren. That is all Hannah saw. If some of you just had the love of a man. The husband said "Baby, don't you know how much I love you? My love for you is worth more than ten sons!" What did Hannah say? "I have this woman on my neck!" God's love for you. What is it that you want that is more valuable than God's love for you? God's love for you often limits what he can give you. As a parent you know you can't give your child everything they want. It would just spoil them and mess them up all kinds of ways. God's love for you often limits what he can give you, and he must send you through the course of time. It is all through the bible about the course of time.

So many people in the bible had to go through the course of time...even when it is tough. A patient who had a serious accident asked the doctor, "Doctor, how long will I have to lay here?" The answer the doctor gave was: "You only have to lay there one day at a time." Some of you are asking "Pastor, how long do I have to endure this?" You only have to endure that one day at a time. If you understand about God's course of time it makes a difference.

My father, who was an extremely successful businessman, said that he was sitting out on the porch one day and he saw up in the sky the words "Millionaire". He never

explained whether he saw it literally, or in the spirit, or whether it was a cloud formation that he just saw the word 'millionaire' in. He saw it, and he knew from that that he would be a millionaire. The thing is, my father did not get a million dollars until he was 75 years old. Not until the course of time. My mother even said that while we were growing up, she could only save a certain amount of money. A very small amount and something would always come and wipe that money away. She never could understand why she never could get past that point. Because it was the course of time.

God knew that the Bronner family didn't need a million dollars in the bank, because it may have messed up the boys. So he knew that he had to keep us lean. He had to keep us grateful, and he had to keep us thankful. I remember when my mother would sometimes cook steak, and she would take one steak. It would be ridiculous when we would go to a restaurant and see people with a whole steak, because that steak fed the whole family. It fed six boys, a daddy, and a mama. So mama would take that steak and we would have a sliver of steak. So the concept of a whole steak was out of the question. We had a sliver of steak. If my dad would have had that million dollars in the bank we may have had a whole steak. The thing is, it would have spoiled us. So it was the course of time, and though my father saw it in the sky, he had no idea it would take that long, and he would have to go through that much struggle.

Before he saw that million dollars manifested, he sat down on the mourner's bench at the bank. My mother said that sometimes they had to put up the whole house as collateral for some loans, and the hard times and the tough times. When he saw the 'million' he said "Oh my goodness, I am going to be a millionaire next week!" No, it was not next week! It was in the course of time, and the course of time will take you through some things. Because...this revelation just hit me...because it is a course. Because it is a training. When you go to college, you sign up for courses. It is *the course of time*. So in the course of time, God has to take that time to teach you some things, to train you in some things, so you can have a degree in godly living and in God's ways before he can grant you some stuff. You have to go through the course!

So the course of time takes us through sometimes so much. And even with Noah, when God told Noah to build the Ark...first of all, he was 500 years old. Noah was the oldest man in the bible to have children. He was 500 years old before the bible said he had Ham, Shem and Japheth. 500 years old! Noah had to say "Lord, what is taking me so long?!" Then it took him 120 years to build the Ark. All of this stuff in the course of time, and I am sure Noah had to wonder "Why in the world Lord, all of my brothers have children. I am 500 years old, and I have no children!" Abraham was 100 years old.

When David was anointed, and Samuel went down to Jesse's house, and he had all of the sons paraded. When he anointed David, he anointed David to be King of

Israel. It took 22 years between the time of the anointing, and when David was King of Israel. It took the course of time because David had to learn some stuff. He wasn't ready to be king. He had the stuff in him, but he had to go through the course before he was ready for the throne. Tell yourself: "I am in school now, I am taking a course." You are taking a course. You are going through the course of time! You have to go through this thing.

As I was back in my office this morning, God spoke to me and said something. It is in the bible, but it just brought a whole new revelation to it. He said simply this, he said: "Man, looks for the growth on the outside. I look for the growth on the inside." That is the thing that happened even when Samuel was parading Jesse's sons before him, and he looked at David and said this is the king. God said "No, I have not chosen him; I rejected him." He said because man looks on the outward appearance. I look on the heart.

As you are waiting for some things, you are thinking about the growth on the outside. You are looking at your bank account. "Lord, I don't see any growth here. I don't see a tap of growth there." You are looking at your body and it is getting worse. So you are looking at some stuff, and you are thinking about the growth. It may be growing, but it is in the wrong direction. You are looking at all of this stuff about this growth, and it is just not happening. But your spirit. When God sends you through the course, the growth occurs on the inside. It occurs in your spirit. It occurs in your mind.

It is not that he doesn't care about your external stuff, but your external stuff is going to rot and go to dust. So God cares about the stuff that is eternal. That is the real thing. The more you become mature, the more you understand that the real growth is not the external stuff. The real growth is here.

All of the external stuff, even your body, all of the physical stuff turns to dust. God is concerned about the things that will be eternal. You will understand that in the course of time.