

Text: 1 Sam. 2:1-10

Title: "A year of the joy of victory"

Time: 1/5/2025

Place: NBBC

Introduction: London England was a special place to be on May 8, 1945. Around 3 o'clock that afternoon, Winston Churchill addressed a thronging crowd of happy people who were ready to begin a celebration of VE Day, Victory in Europe Day, that would last for some days. He began his speech this way: "Hostilities will end officially at one minute after midnight tonight. We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing." With those words London exploded with patriotic cheer at their victory in battle over the existential threat of the Nazis. Churchill spoke of a brief period of rejoicing, because Japan was still not yet vanquished, but the rejoicing experienced in that city on that day was an especially unique kind of rejoicing. It was the joy of victory over an enemy threat.

This special rejoicing over an enemy threat is what Hannah expresses when she says. "My heart rejoices in the Lord" (v. 1). The word translated *rejoice* here is not the common word so translated from the Hebrew in our Bibles, but a word that appears in contexts that involve victory over an enemy. One Hebrew scholar says this about the word: "every occurrence of the word has a context of victory, a victory won or to be won by God, giving His people cause and liberty to 'rejoice'" (NIDOTE). Psa. 25:2 brings this nuance out especially well: "O my God, I trust in thee; let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies *triumph* [same word] over me."

One of the stubborn facts of living the Christian life is that we are in a battle in which we face a fearsome enemy. This battle wages in ways that may seem insignificant to the world but are very significant to those in the battle and very significant to the God of those in the battle. Hannah's great spiritual battle involved the irritation of Peninnah, a rival wife. When God

gave her victory in this battle, Hannah experienced a wonderful joy, the kind of joy spiritual victory brings, and so she prays a prayer of victory (v. 1). I want us to notice three things about Hannah's prayer of victory this morning as we begin a new year with the hope of true spiritual victory ahead of us.

I. Hannah experienced the joy of victory because of the nature of her Lord, and so can we (vv. 2-3).

Illustration: In the world of sports, there comes along from at times a certain individual or team who simply cannot be beaten. Tiger Woods was that kind of golfer at one time; Mike Tyson was that kind of boxer at one time; Michael Jordan was that kind of basketball player at one time; Secretariat was that kind of horse at one time. Eventually, however, each of these unbeatable performers passed their pinnacle, or just had an off day, and that was the day when they could be beaten.

Application: In the spiritual battles we face, our Lord is one competitor whose nature always means that He cannot be beaten, and Hannah rejoiced in this nature of her God as she interpreted her own victory as something that she experienced because of who her God is. She says four things about Him.

A. Hannah's God is exclusively holy (2a-b).

Holiness is one of those essential attributes of God that can be difficult to define, but I want you to see that Hannah had a definition. She says: "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside thee." The first phrase states the attribute: God is holy. And the second explains the attribute.

The second phrase can be translated one of two ways, either "there is none beside thee" as in our KJV, or "there is none/ nothing without thee" (the word translated *beside* means *without* in Isa. 14:6, where *continual stroke* is very literally *a stroke without ceasing*).

Let's read the verse this way: "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is nothing without thee." God's holiness is explained by the fact that nothing exists without Him. Said differently, the existence of everything depends on Him. This is the Creator-creature distinction between God and His creation. He is absolutely independent of His creation, and His creation is absolutely dependent on Him (enemies included). Holy God is not a god we make or imagine for ourselves, but one that has imagined and made us. This God cannot be defeated in His battles for us, because as a holy God, all creation depends upon Him and His existence is entirely independent of it.

B. Hannah's God is absolutely impregnable (2c).

Webster's defines impregnable as "incapable of being taken by assault." This is what Hannah means when she calls God a one-of-a-kind rock in this passage. You simply cannot assail the fortress that is built on this rock. David understood this: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; the God of my rock; in him will I trust; he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. I will call on the Lord who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies" (2 Sam. 22:1-4). Because Hannah's God is an impregnable rock, those who take refuge in Him will be saved from their enemies.

C. Hannah's God is thoroughly expert (3a).

In the original language the word *knowledge* appears in the plural form to intensify the description of God as a knowledgeable God. He is intensely knowledgeable. Name the topic, and He is thoroughly expert in it.

Hannah warns us against thinking that we know better than He does (v. 3a). We have all kinds of examples of modern man failing to heed this warning. The atheist author Richard

Dawkins compares those who question the creative power of macro-evolution to those who deny that the Holocaust happened. He states dogmatically in his book, *The Greatest Show on Earth*: "Evolution is a fact. Beyond reasonable doubt, beyond serious doubt, beyond sane, informed, intelligent doubt, beyond doubt evolution is a fact. The evidence for evolution is at least as strong as the evidence for the Holocaust, even allowing for eyewitnesses to the Holocaust. It is the plain truth that we are the cousins of chimpanzees, somewhat more distant cousins of monkeys, more distant cousins still of aardvarks and manatees, yet more distant cousins of bananas and turnips . . . continue the list as long as desired." Well, Hannah has some sound instruction for Richard Dawkins and his followers: "Talk no more so exceedingly proudly" (v. 3).

D. Hannah's God is accurately just (3b).

The phrase that we have in our KJV translation indicates that God is someone who weighs the actions of men. That is certainly true (v. 10), but I do not think that this is what the Hebrew is saying here. Rather than *by Him* I think we do better to translate the phrase *when it comes to Him actions are weighed*. So, Hannah is talking about God's actions, not man's actions. And God's actions are weighed in the sense that they are weighed correctly, accurately, and justly (cp. Ezek. 18:25, 29; 33:17, 20).

Man likes to question whether God's ways are truly just. Certainly, Hannah must have wondered from time to time as she asked for Samuel, as she suffered the persecutions of her rival, and even as she endured the well-meaning but inept comforting efforts of her husband, whether God's ways were truly equitable and just. Part of the joy of victory in spiritual battles like this is the joy of realizing again that God cannot be anything less than perfectly equitable and accurately just.

Hannah experienced the joy of spiritual victory over the enemy because of the nature of her God, and so can we, because

her God is our God too. He is exclusively holy, absolutely impregnable, thoroughly expert, and accurately just in His protection of and care for us.

II. Hannah experienced the joy of victory over the enemy because her God loves the humble; we can too (vv. 4-5, 7-8a).

Illustration: The term *underdog* is not meant normally as a criticism. In fact, there is something endearing to us about the term, so much so that one of our mythical superheroes was named, "Underdog." Great Britain had *The Underdog Show*. *The Underdog Show* was a reality TV contest in which dog trainers were paired up with rescue dogs in a contest to see which trainer/dog combination could learn the quickest. Every week some trainer/dog team was eliminated until the winner stood alone. The show is called *The Underdog Show* because the dogs used are all rescue dogs that were formally abandoned. We all want to root for an underdog (unless you are a Yankees fan, of course).

Application: God's people are always the underdogs in spiritual battle (or "undersheep"; Eph. 6:12; lions + wolves vs. sheep). Hannah understood the position of the underdog as a barren woman inexplicably unable to have children. And as she reflects on the victory the Lord gave her, she comes to realize that one of the reasons for her victory is that the Lord cares about underdogs, the disadvantaged, the weak things of this world, those who have a humble attitude toward Him.

We see this theme often repeated in the New Testament: 1 Cor. 1:27, "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty"; Jesus spoke of this in the Sermon on the Mount when He taught: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see the kingdom of God." Hannah understands that it is the poor in spirit that are blessed because it is her God's special delight to

help this kind of person. And so well-armed champions fear while those who had stumbled find true power (v. 4); the full become hungry and the hungry full (v. 5a), the fruitful womb stops giving birth and the barren womb brings forth children (v. 5b), a case especially close to Hannah's heart. We can take heart when we find that we are the underdog against our enemy. Our God, Hannah's God, has a special place in His heart for us who are weak and humble.

III. Hannah experienced the joy of victory over the enemy because her Lord does powerful works; we can too (vv. 6, 8b-10).

Application: The Apostle Paul emphasized that the weapons of the believer's warfare are not carnal ones, but mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4). Simply put, only God's miracles can win the victory we need in spiritual battle. Hannah remembers some of these powerful works of her God as she rejoices in her victory.

A. The powerful work of resurrection (v. 6).

Here in Hannah's song we see her faith that God has power over the grave, the power to kill and then to raise up again, to resurrect. So many of our spiritual battles also involve physical battles of sickness and disease. But our victory in the Lord is such that not even killing us can ultimately defeat us.

Illustration: Many brave martyrs of the Christian church professed as much when they faced their torturers, perhaps none more stirringly than Hugh Latimer, who, condemned with Bishop Ridley to burn at the stake under Bloody Mary's Roman Catholicism, beckoned to his brother as the stakes were set ablaze: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." To quicken the death and shorten the agony, a bag of gunpowder was hung around the necks of the men. When Ridley was given his, he

asked what it was, and after learning what it was, he said: "Then I take it to be sent of God; therefore, I will receive it as sent of Him." God is the one who kills, and He raises up again. The author of Hebrews knew believers who believed this truth: "Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection" (11:35).

B. The powerful work of creation (v. 8b).

Hannah was victorious because she knew the God who laid the pillars or the foundations of the earth. The more we learn of the evidence of God's mighty creation, the more we become confident that our victory is in Him.

C. The powerful work of love (v. 9).

The word translated *saints* here is a word that means we are the objects of God's covenantal love. The Scripture promises that the God of peace shall soon crush the serpent under our feet (Rom. 16:20), and He keeps His promises of love to His saints.

D. The powerful work of the Messiah (v. 10).

The word *Anointed* in this verse is the Hebrew word from which we get the word *Messiah*. In Greek it is the word *Christ*. It comes from a verb meaning *to smear* and refers to the smearing of the anointing oil that was done when God called someone to be king, prophet, or priest.

At this juncture in Israel's history, no king had ever been anointed in this way. Hannah is not speaking of Saul, nor David, when she refers to God's giving strength to His king for the final victory over the enemy. Instead, she speaks of the promised King of kings and Lord of lords, the promised Messiah, the promised anointed one, the promised Christ. That

promise was made to Abraham and Jacob and their sons. Remember the prophecy regarding Judah: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh (he to whom it belongs) comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” (Gen. 49:10).

Conclusion: 2025 may be the year Jesus returns and completes that project promised to Judah thousands of years ago. Hannah understood that the victory she experienced over her enemy was the victory of the coming Messiah. She could see His day and its victory coming. Like her, let’s look for Him, trust Him in the midst of battle, and patiently await our VE Day – Victory over the Enemy Day, when we too shall shout in triumph with great joy.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching