



The 'I AM' and the 'I WANT'... 1 Samuel 1-2:10

by Pastor Tim Dodson, Wednesday July 22th, 2015

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We are now coming out of the Book of Judges and out of the *period* of Judges. It was a time when "everyone did what was right in their own eyes." It was a failed paradigm. Ultimately proving inadequate as a political

construct and social design. It was one of several "alternatives" that sprung from man's desire to call the shots and rule their lives without God. And God let them do it. *He still does*. The people went from priests in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, to possessions in Joshua, to the rescue and rule of 'caped crusaders' in Judges, and now will seek solace, safety and prosperity under the rule of a human king.

I have this dog that occasionally I chain up if I intend to be gone for a moderate period of a few days or so. I have discovered that if there is *anything* remotely within the reach of entanglement, she will indeed wrap the chain around and around it, ultimately reducing her range of freedom and relegating her to self-imposed captivity. As with us, God will often give us a very long leash of rebellion, only to have us run to the end of such anyway and ultimately become entangled. Finally we all seem to strangle ourselves to death in the very freedoms we demand. Perhaps it's because we so often fail to really understand what true freedom is?

Having made a mess of this cultural model in Judges, now the people of God would move on to a new plan...this time they would seek to be ruled over by a king. *That will do it! That will make us happy! That will resolve our problems and bring harmony to our society!* Only it won't, and it didn't. But it was a journey in which the people of God had to travel in order to get it through their thick heads that no matter how hard they would try, they would never be able to successfully rule over themselves, until one day...*finally*, ...they would need only one thing: *a Savior*. Someone to rescue them from themselves. Someone to pick us up out of the sewer of life, clean us up, and fix all that we had broken. It's called *redemption*, and we all sooner or later come to terms with it and our own shocking failure to be able to manage our own personal lives, let alone all the responsibilities for those around us in marriage, family, and relationships.

Many of us today are midway on this journey of revelation. We are still trying to find a way to call the shots and be "masters of our own domain." We want the power of self-determination, yet we don't know where we are going, how to get there, how long it will take, or the consequences of such an end. But nothing short of finding out for ourselves will ever do it seems. So God regretfully and reluctantly lets us go. Off to "find our way" in an unforgiving world...a world where we know better than God, a realm where we seek empowerment and fulfillment in judges and kings...in governments and presidents, in cultural norms and standards, in the worlds acceptable behavior, in laws that we ultimately break, and in imaginary material entitlements that we fail to receive. All of it ultimately designed to unwittingly make us mad. To make us angry, frustrated, empty and broken.

The only power we find that we ultimately have, is the power to choose how long it takes us to make this run. Some brilliant young teenagers will see the light early and will rock this world in their lifetime and make their life count and will experience the fullness of God's joy...of God's pleasure for them and in them. Others will spend a lifetime running, and maybe...if the stars align just right, they may get 'snatched from the flames' on their way out the door as an old man or woman, having wasted their lives and burned everything and everyone along the way.

First Samuel begins with *one more judge*, a man by the name of Samuel. This was a man literally chosen and called by God, something that you and I experience and enjoy...every last one of us, that we most often flippantly ignore or marginalize. But Samuel...despite the people's ultimate rejection of him, would make his time count. He would "move the world."

Our story begins inexplicably in a tiny corner of the world in a seemingly inconsequential family. Perhaps they felt as many of us do, that we are nobody from nowhere. Yet God would move to do a powerful work through this family, and it is likely that even they had no idea of the magnitude of it. The center player herein is one "Hannah" who found herself unable to have a child. Why? Seems like a simple request and a righteous desire. Why wouldn't God give this request to her? Why put her through such pain? Doesn't He love her?

No matter how much she had prayed up to this point, her prayers were answered in the negative. It wasn't because she was not a 'good person'...in fact she was Godly and righteous. It was not because of her husband...we know he could bear children because he had children with another woman. It was not because they had a bad relationship...he thought the world of her. And we know she was in her childbearing years. So what was the problem? Where was God? Why the silent treatment? Why is she getting a raw deal?

It was here in which generations of people in the pages we have already passed, all 'turned left.' They all went their own way...took control of their destiny (or at least tried), and attempted to force the outcome that they wanted. Millions of others that would follow would also take that left hand turn and would each in turn follow the person in front of them to become just one of the millions upon millions that would blindly follow each other off the cliff. No one looking up ahead. No one asking where this path leads. No one looking at history to see the results of such blind resolution. Each just falling off the cliff...empty, without purpose and reason to have lived...all didn't want God's 'unfair' response, and all ditched Him to go their own way.

But Hannah stopped the historical clock. One woman. From nowhere she was about to change the path of history. All because she "turned right." Even though she did not understand and had come to know even pain and despair, she refused to follow the crowd off the cliff. No one will argue Hannah's pain. Her heart was grieved and it seemed no doubt as if she would not be able to endure it. To make matters worse, she would be misunderstood, and mis-read. Her extended family would ridicule and criticize. Many of you know this so very first hand! But please note how Hannah handled this. She did not reject God, His people or His house. In fact, she did the opposite, and went to the tabernacle to pray and seek God.

I wonder how many will or already have come to such a place in their lives? A place where they just don't understand why God is doing what He is doing and thus become angry, bitter, and isolated. How many will at this point retake control of their lives...determined to make it happen the way we see is right? If God won't do it...if God won't give it, then we will take matters into our own hands and force the issue. *I will get my own husband...or my own wife. I will get sexual satisfaction my own way. I will fix this financial situation I am in...I will get a job that pays me enough. I will have a baby one way or another. I will go there on my own and on my own dime then! I will find another church that appreciates my abilities! I will alleviate this discomfort on my own.* Etc. Etc. All of it exercised and answered not by the great "I AM" but by the high and mighty "I WILL."

Hannah went to the only one that could fix this. The only one she could go to, and that was God. And she made a promise to Him...an up-to-now absent promise that was perhaps the cause of her not knowing the fruition of her request, we do not know. But she told God that *what was hers was His*. That if she was allowed to have a child, she would give the child back to Him. A child sanctified from the womb.

You see Hannah understood a great truth that, *from an "outsiders" point a view*, will say it appears few really do. And that truth is that her child was not hers. He or she was merely on loan. Such a blessing was a ministry...a responsibility to care and steward until that child is an adult and leaves home to go out and make his or her own decisions. How many have answered loving council and advice with the statement..."*Yes, that's fine, but this is MY child.*" Maybe you even went on to say so this is **my** business and for **me** to decide and for **me** to deal with. Not according to scripture it's not. How many allow or even dictate decisions in their children that will eventually have negative long term or eternal spiritual ramifications because you have taken ownership? So **you** will decide their discipline or lack thereof. **YOU** will decide their moral parameters, and their spiritual priorities. After all...you are the parent, so of course **YOU** know best right? And besides...I not hearing from God so...

Like proverbial lemmings off the cliff, one following the previous who was following the one in front of him who was following the one in front of him. Each person going down a road that is a paved and maintained four lane interstate...each driving along with the masses before us...never considering that we are not where we belong. Why would we? It's comfortable...it's easy...it's so fast and smooth. This *has* to be God's will, right? Of course this is the "open door" because everyone knows God's open doors are the easy paths and the comfortable paths and the "feel good" paths!

But where does this leave Hannah?

Ezekial 36:9 God says "Behold, I am for you..." How many believers throughout scripture suffered for their faith? Why do we think we are to be different? How many modern martyrs sacrificed everything for God and kingdom? How many have forgoed marriage or children or material gain or high pay or comfort or ease...all to fulfill a greater love for a God whom sometimes asks us to do the uncomfortable, the difficult, the unpopular, the costly, the even painful thing?

How many have I spoken to over the years who stood on the cusp of something great...in ministry, in service, in personal life relationship with God and suddenly "*wow! look what God has given me! I think I am going to go consume this new heavenly gift instead...*" And that was the last they were heard from. Oh, they might still be with us physically, but they have "checked out" for what they naturally saw as a 'blessing from God' because it was what they really wanted in the flesh and it was so very pleasing, so it HAD to be from God, right? And like 30 pieces of silver, we surrender the "I AM" for the "I WANT."

Hannah was a "woman of sorrowful spirit" (Chapter 1, verse 15), and she was exactly where God wanted her...in exactly the place for God to bless...in exactly the place to fulfill his plan for ALL parties involved around her, not just her. God loved Hannah. And Hannah loved God.

She loved God, *even though...*