

More Are the Children of the Desolate

By George Davis and Michael Clark

This article is a message of hope for all who have felt that bit of panic as you see the end of your years coming, with little fruit to show for it. You had such hope for your life but look at you now. Jesus has promised you great fruitfulness. He chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain (see John 15:16), but now, in the declining years of your life, you feel more spiritually barren than ever. To make things worse, even your natural strength is failing you.

Take heart, for you are in extremely good company. You are not the first one to have felt this way. In fact, those heirs of the promise that brought forth the greatest fruit unto God were in similar situations. The promise is not to the expert. The race does not go to the swift, nor the battle to the strong (see Ecclesiastes 9:11). Those who wait upon the Lord, not charging on ahead in their own strength, but remaining ready and available for His use, will be given a source of strength unknown to the mighty and noble. They will run and not grow weary.

God's principle of fruitfulness is strikingly set out in Isaiah 54:1-2.

Sing, barren, you who didn't bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says Yahweh. (2) Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations; don't spare: lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. (WEB)



How could the desolate have more children than the married wife? This is a natural impossibility, and that is the point exactly. The path of the Lord runs straight through the impossible every time, and often seems to lead directly away from the blessing He has promised us. Like dear departed Lazarus who was beyond the realm of all natural help and hope, wrapped in grave clothes and rotting in his tomb, God shuts us up unto faith awaiting the call to come forth unto Him. He IS himself the resurrection and the life. If

we could resurrect ourselves from the dead then we might be able, by our own strength, to bring forth fruit unto God. But between the promise and the provision is a place of dead barrenness--a place where our natural strength fails us--a place of waiting in hope for resurrection life.

A dear brother recently told us, "Things in the Kingdom of God are not done; they are birthed." God made a covenant with Abraham and his Seed. In that regard He elected to bring about His purposes through the natural process of begetting and birthing, a natural figure of the spiritual birthing. The Bible genealogies record the long line of begotten ones through whom He birthed His first begotten Son, Jesus, into the world, through the womb of one who knew no husband.

As a Son, Jesus came bringing the revelation of God as Father. We must not pass this lightly. God is called Father because He is the begetter. Just as in the natural, what the Father does not beget is not His offspring. Those fruits that are born out of man's strength and ingenuity are not acceptable to Him. Paul wrote, "[not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God](#)" (2 Corinthians 3:5). To know God as Father IS to know Him as the progenitor of all things.

The first verb in the New Testament is (*gennaō*), *begat*. "[Abraham begat Isaac](#)." That sounds fairly simple and painless doesn't it? But the birth of Isaac was a supernatural birth that tested the limits of Abraham's patience and faith. Abraham and Sarah are a natural figure of the spiritual process God still uses to birth His purposes through yielded vessels.

Not far from our homes in Idaho is a little town called Hope. Just past Hope on state highway 200 is another little community appropriately named Beyond Hope. Before God fulfilled His promise of fruitfulness to Abraham and Sarah He first brought them to a place beyond all natural hope. Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was barren, but to make things worse, at ninety years old, she also was well past the age of bearing children.

God gave Abraham an incredible promise of fruitfulness. "[. . .in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore. Your seed will possess the gate of his enemies.](#)" O boy!

It's onward and upward from here, right? All Abraham and Sarah had to do was come together and nine months later--not!

Between the promise and the provision stood the impotence of Abraham and the barren womb of Sarah. In fact, barrenness was a tradition in Abraham's family; a tradition established by God. The women most favored were often those who were barren and the children of promise were those born of barren women, such as Sarah the mother of Isaac (Genesis 11:30), Rebekah the mother of Jacob (Genesis 25:21) and Rachael the mother of Joseph (Genesis 30:1). All of these women were barren and certainly all of these sons were special. From one man, who was already considered dead, there arose a race as numerous as the stars, as countless as the sands of the sea-shore. More are the children of the desolate!

Then there was another special woman named Hannah, of whom we shall speak in more depth later. For now, suffice it to say that Hannah reveals, in a special way, the divine purpose of barrenness, "for the Lord had shut up her womb" to this mysterious end. (See 1 Samuel 1:5).

Back to Abraham

God had promised Abraham great fruitfulness. Years passed and still no seed. From a natural perspective, things were looking awfully bleak. However, there was one more trick up Sarah's sleeve. Sarah had an Egyptian bondmaid named Hagar. If a wife was barren in those days her bondmaid could have offspring for her. In desperation Sarah sent Abraham into Hagar. After all, Abraham couldn't sit there and do nothing could he? Hagar conceived and brought forth a son, who they named Ishmael. O boy! Finally some fruit! Doubtless, Abraham thought that Ishmael was the son of promise. He had to be! For all other avenues were closed, right? No! God had chosen Sarah, the barren one, not Hagar. Although God loved him, this child of Hagar could not be the son of promise. Therefore, God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but her name will be Sarah. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. Yes, I will bless her, and she will be a mother of nations. Kings of peoples will come from her."

It was at this point that Abraham did something unbecoming the father of the faith. He "fell on his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Will a child be born to him who is one hundred years old? Will Sarah, who is ninety years old, give birth?'" Because of

the seeming impossibility of God's promise, Abraham pleaded, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" God's answer came immediately, "No, but Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You shall call his name Isaac (laughter)" (Genesis 17:15-19). It seemed that God was getting the last laugh.

Now consider Jacob and Rachel. Rachel also was barren and in her desperation she cried out to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" (Genesis 30:2, NKJV). Rachel followed in Sarah's example and in desperation, cried out to Jacob instead of to God. Her answer to him was, "Behold, my maid Bilhah. Go in to her, that she may bear on my knees, and I also may obtain children by her" (Genesis 30:2-3 WEB) In His time God, by His mercy, remembered Rachel and opened her womb. She conceived and brought forth Joseph, another miracle offspring (Genesis 30:1). Like Sarah, Rachel tried to fulfill God's promise through her own ingenuity with this son born of Bilhah the slave. His name was Dan. It is interesting that when the tribes of Israel are listed in the book of Revelation, Dan is not mentioned, but Joseph is. God only honors those sons that He gives. He only blesses the offspring that are born of barren wombs, beyond all hope of natural productivity.

Let's sum up for a moment, that we might see the principle of barrenness. God gave a promise, but between the promise and the provision was a barren womb. Sarah tried to contravene the process by sending Abraham into the Egyptian bondmaid, but her offspring was unacceptable to God. Sarah and Abraham had created their own promised son, which they proudly offered up to God. God rejected Ishmael. Abraham begged God to reconsider, for in his mind there was no other way that the son of promise could come. But God had purposed that the provision should come through barrenness so that no flesh could glory in His presence.

Here we see an example and admonition for the church today. God gives a promise and then waits. He waits to see if we will wait. He waits to see if we will trust Him as FATHER or attempt to bring the promise to pass through our own virility.

How often do we come to God offering our Ishmael, the offspring of our flesh, only to hear that eternal "NO"? Yet we continue to beg God to allow our Ishmael to live in His sight. We go about producing the offspring of Hagar that are in bondage with all of her

children. (See Galatians 4:21-31). How much of what is done today in the name of God is the product of flesh and leads to legalism and bondage? How much of our praying before God, to bless our doings, is no different than Abraham's pleading, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you," and it, too, falls on deaf ears? We come up with a good idea, put it into action by our own strength and then ask God to bless it. We see this happening on every front of Christendom. Flesh can only beget flesh and bondage can only birth greater bondage.

The travail of soul that comes out of barrenness and knowing that the provision is beyond the innovations of our flesh, but requires a miracle from heaven, is a rarity. All the religious works of religious man put together cannot compare to the fruit of one life that has been shut up unto barrenness, shut up unto faith and in patience inheriting the promise. Indeed, ". . . [more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife](#). . ." God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the mighty.

God makes sure that nothing of our flesh can glory in His presence. We might persuade thousands to follow us and put their energies into our movement or program, but if God does not father it, it will all come to naught. Someone once said the definition of an insane man is one who keeps doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results. When will we ever learn that "[He doesn't delight in the strength of the horse. He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man](#)" (Psalm 147:10)? "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them [who rely on the Lord—see verse 8] whose heart is perfect toward him" ([see 2 Chronicles 16:9](#)). He desires us to experience the impotence of our flesh that we will no longer put any confidence in it. "[In my flesh dwells no good thing](#)."

This Brings Us to Hannah

Hannah was also barren, but she seemed to understand the necessity and purpose of barrenness in a way that none of these other women had. Perhaps she had seen the error of Sarah and Rachel who attempted to fulfill the promise by the fleshly means of sending their husbands into their bondmaids. The example Of Hannah stands alone in that she neither looked to her husband, as Rachel had, saying, "Give me children, or else I die," nor did she turn to a bondmaid to remove the shame of her barrenness. Instead she came to the door-post of the tabernacle and poured out her soul to the only

One Who could open her womb. She seemed to see prophetically, and out of this clarity of vision and travail of soul was born the greatest prophet of Israel, Samuel.

This is extremely significant. Hannah recognized that her barrenness was given by God to accomplish some greater end. Figuratively speaking, have you ever had the Lord shut up your womb? Have you ever prayed in desperation, "Give me children, or else I die"? Have you considered that those times in your life when you are the most barren are appointed by God as a test to see if you will seek to do spiritual works in your flesh? Our driest spiritual seasons are often followed by the greatest periods of growth. It's true! It is in such times that we are invited to travail in prayer to our heavenly husband. But if we are not careful, we will seek to remove our shame vicariously, like Sarah and Rachel, through fleshly handmaidens.

In His mercy, God brings us to a place beyond our natural capabilities as He did with Elisabeth the mother of John the Baptist, who was well stricken in years (Luke 1:7), beyond the time of childbearing, That ["the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us"](#) (see [2 Corinthians 4:7](#)).

The Lord had shut up Hannah's womb. "She wept, and did not eat." Her husband, Elkanah, asked her the reason. "Why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" he asked (1 Samuel 1:8 WEB). Even the love of her husband could not diminish her desire to bring forth his fruit into the earth. She did not turn to her natural husband but to her heavenly husband.

Off to Shiloh she went, where Eli the priest was sitting on his seat by the door-post of the tabernacle. There, in the shame of her barrenness, she poured out her soul to the Lord. The Lord heard her cry and gave her a son, who she named Samuel. In this instance the old adage is true that the seed does not fall far from the tree. For we see in Hannah's response a prophetic clarity and understanding of the ways of God that rivals any prophet.

You will remember that the birth of Samuel was impossible of realization along the ordinary line of nature, but his mother Hannah entered into a spiritual travail concerning him. While in that spiritual travail, while before the Lord in strong crying and tears for this man-child, the other wife of her husband laughed at her, sneered at her, looked down upon her. She had children, Hannah had none, and was despised; and then by a special intervention and act of God that spiritual travail was answered

and Samuel was born. Born, on the one hand, out of travail in her soul, on the other hand, born out of a direct act of God in His Divine intervention when man was helpless, and nature was impotent. (T. Austin Sparks, *Because of the Blood of the Lamb*)

After Samuel was born, Hannah prayed, and said: "My heart exults in Yahweh; my horn is exalted in Yahweh; my mouth is enlarged over my enemies; because I rejoice in your salvation. There is none holy as Yahweh; for there is none besides you, neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; don't let arrogance come out of your mouth; for Yahweh is a God of knowledge, by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken; those who stumbled are girded with strength. Those who were full have hired out themselves for bread; those who were hungry have ceased to hunger: Yes, the barren has borne seven; she who has many children languishes" (1 Samuel 2:1-5). Hannah understood something that Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel did not. She understood God's principle of fruitfulness. "More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife."

The travail of Hannah typifies so well the deep yearning within the hearts of so many of God's children today, who desire above all else to bring forth fruit unto God! More than any other people, these are aware of their barrenness. They have learned not to cover the shame of their barrenness with the works of their hands. Unlike Abraham, they know that to go into Hagar is to bring forth fruit unto the flesh and unto bondage and that such fruit is forever at enmity with God's purposes. Isaiah did rightly prophesy:

Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely upon his God. Look, all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with sparks: Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled--this you shall have from My hand: You shall lie down in torment. (Isaiah 50:10, 11, NKJV).

The saints of God who know His heart understand that the fig leaves of the flesh can never cover the shame of their barrenness. They have learned that Ishmael is unacceptable in God's sight. They know that God will not allow the son of the bondwoman to inherit with the son of the promise (see Galatians 4). They understand, as Paul did, that it is out of weakness that Christ's strength is made perfect in them. They know that it is out of barrenness and travail of soul that God births the Isaacs,

Jacobs, Josephs and Samuels through whom the promise, purpose and provision of His kingdom comes upon the earth.

These are they who travail before the Lord in strong crying and tears for the man-child-for that divine expression of Christ in the earth. There will always be those who laugh at the seeming barrenness of these travailing ones who wait upon the Lord and His creation to come forth. Like Elkanah's other wife, these scoffers have brought forth many children in their own strength and are content in their fruitfulness. Never mind that their offspring persecute God's children of promise. These look down upon all those whom they perceive to have lesser fruit. God not only seeks a seed that are more than the number of the stars in heaven, but he seeks a godly seed that will bring forth glory to Him with their lives. The carnal do not understand the fruit that is born, on the one hand, out of travail of soul and on the other hand, out of a direct act of God "when man was helpless, and nature was impotent."

The story of Hannah gives us a natural picture that perfectly corresponds to the spiritual reality of the law of travail. In Revelation 12, we read of a woman that enters into this spirit of travail. In her labor she brings forth a man-child (a mature child), which we believe is a figure of the bringing forth of a remnant company--a prophetic company. This prophetic community, living by the spirit of Christ, speaking those things they hear the Father speaking, doing those things they see the Father doing, are those who are caught up unto God and to His throne. It is this company that Satan, the red dragon, is eager to devour. There are those who are travailing for the birth of the man-child. We meet them nearly everywhere we go. They are like Hannah in that they do not turn to earthly husbands or to fleshly bondmaids but come to God in travail of soul, asking for a man-child for His service, for Hannah gave the child to the service of the Lord from the time Samuel was weaned. These are often mocked, as Hannah was, by those who are like Elkanah's other wife or, even worse, by the priests of our day. Eli accused Hannah of being drunk as she prayed. Christendom today knows little about travail and is smug and contented in its vast mediocrity, bringing forth children unto itself, after its own image.

If you are a part of this Hannah-company, travailing before the Lord for this man-child, know this: it wasn't until his old age that Simeon held the infant Christ, the first begotten of the Father, that he had prayed and waited for his entire life. Let's not settle for lesser fruit. Let's not substitute the empty offspring of religion for the reality of the

mature Christ child, the fullness of Him who fills all things. Let us not carve out once again broken cisterns for ourselves while we reject the flow that can only come from the Fountain of Living Water.

It is not until the womb of our flesh is closed, and our souls are poured out, that we will know true fruitfulness. So what should we say to those who minister in Ishmael-like strength, who ask, "So what is God doing in your life?" Perhaps this would be a good answer. "Nothing! God has closed my womb! I am just being barren before the Lord, pouring out my soul, knowing that what He has promised He will do! I have no desire to fabricate anything. I have no following, nor do I desire one! I have no church building and receive no tithe. I have no titles, no office, and no honor in my family or in my country. But I have a promise and He is faithful who has made it!"

By today's standard we are truly barren, but by God's standard we are like Hannah, for we are not ashamed of our barrenness but are aware that any fruit in our lives is His, not ours. Therefore, we are not ashamed, nor will we be, for God has promised! And what is more, when it seems like time is running out, and we are well past the time of childbearing we remember these words of David, "[He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise the LORD!](#)" (Psalms 113:9). I am what I am by the grace of God!

Though all the facts around us are like scoffers, mocking the disparity between the promise given and the realities of our lives, we know that He is faithful who has promised. Has the Lord given you exceedingly great and precious promises for which you have waited beyond any reasonable time of fulfillment? Don't give up dear ones! Continue to wait in faith! Don't try to fulfill the promise through the innovations or energies of your flesh! For you can no more bring about the promise through your own energies than you could, by these same energies, form a soul and breathe the breath of life into it.

Giving birth is a miracle surpassing any other biological function. All you have to do is sit in on a birth to know this. In His wisdom, the God, who opened the womb of Sarah and Rachel and closed the womb of Hannah for a season, is Himself the prime Mover in inception, conception, development and delivery of all that He promises, desires and commands in and through our lives. He is all and in all! He is Himself the provision we seek. We often do not appreciate the fruit that comes effortlessly, and without thought

through an intimate and abiding relationship with the Lord after our womb has been closed--until we have been shut up with Him for a season.

When our words and deeds seem to fall flat before us, we are most tempted to fake it and keep up the outer appearance of fruitfulness. If we learn to cease from our labors and enter into His rest (see Hebrews 4) rather than performing some fleshly ritual to our own god of fertility, we will see the promise come to pass in the fullness of the Son.

From a divine perspective barrenness is a necessity if we are to be brought to the end of our fleshly strength. God will resist all our attempts to circumvent our barrenness until we have given up all hope of ever producing His fruit by our fleshly efforts. Until then the words of Christ mean nothing, "[That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit](#)" (John 3:6). Flesh is flesh and Spirit is spirit and never the twain shall meet. All that flesh can produce, regardless of how noble it may appear, is still flesh. The goodness of the flesh and the decadence of the flesh are the same to God. They are both flesh and the flesh profits nothing. God has chosen those who are weak, foolish, ignoble and barren to confound the mighty and the wise "that no flesh should glory in his presence" (see 1 Corinthians 1:29). Only the life-giving Spirit can produce spiritual fruit.

"Sing, barren. . .for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife."