

Hannah – a Woman of Faith and Integrity

1 Samuel 1:20-2:11

Introduction:

1 Samuel chapter 1 introduces us to the family of one of the greatest figures of the Old Testament, the prophet Samuel. His father, Elkanah, is a godly man doing his best to point his family to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Every year he made the pilgrimage with his family to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was situated, so that they all could worship the Lord. Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah was childless, which Peninnah cruelly kept before her every time they went to the Tabernacle to worship. So Hannah went to the “temple” to pour out her grief to the Lord. As she prayed Eli the priest mistook her silent supplications for drunkenness. When he heard of her broken heart he promised that God had heard her prayer. That was enough for Hannah. She left the presence of God confident that God was going to do something for her. Sure enough, she conceived and gave birth to a son, who was named Samuel – “God heard.” The childless mother now has what her heart desired – a son. Would that be the end of the story, or was there more to the story?

Samuel Given to the Lord – 1 Samuel 1:20-28, 2:11

1. What wonderful event happened to Hannah according to verse 20?
Remembering the text that precedes this verse, why did this happen? What would be Hannah’s attitude towards this event?

2. Verse 21 establishes that Elkanah continues his faithfulness to worship Yahweh God. Does Hannah join her husband for these trips to Shiloh? Why or why not? (Cf. verse 22)

3. When was Hannah planning to join the family for worship in Shiloh? (v. 22) How old would her son be at that point? What is the plan for her son?

4. What is Elkanah’s response to Hannah’s plan? (v. 23) Would you respond the same?

5. What do you think Elkanah meant by “may the Lord establish his word”? (v. 23)
6. In verse 24 we read about the sacrifices Hannah presents to the Lord. What did she offer? Why?
7. How hard this must have been for Hannah. In verse 24 there is a clue to the pain she might be feeling: “the child was young.” Compare Hannah’s commitment to God to that of Abraham in Genesis 22.
8. As Hannah presents Samuel to Eli, what information does she supply to help the aged priest make sense of what was happening (vss. 26-27)?
9. How does Hannah describe what she is doing in verse 28? It is suggested the word “lent” may be better translated “returned.” How does this apply to any parent’s role and their charge as parents?
10. How does verse 28 end? What is the meaning? How does it help us understand “worship”? (Note also 2:11)

Note the Quote:

“We also learn an important lesson about the connection between worship and service. Samuel was a gift to God, and his life was characterized by continued service to God. Even when Samuel was a young lad the text notes in 2:11 that he served God in the presence of Eli. Another way of understanding this text is to say that Samuel served God by serving Eli. Many times our understanding of worship is too narrow, thinking that worship only takes place in a sanctuary or church. The example of Samuel reminds us that worship is connected to fulfilling our family and work roles in daily life. This understanding of worship not only applies to adults but children and young people as well. Oftentimes our children have the mind-set that they cannot do anything significant for God until they get older. However, it is important for them to understand that they worship God by obeying and helping their parents, striving to do well in their schoolwork, and by treating siblings and friends with respect and kindness. Thus, worship is connected to the things they do on a daily basis. The same is true for adults...

Whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name (and for the glory) of the Lord (Col 3:17)."¹

Hannah's Prayer – 1 Samuel 2:1-10

It is supposed that Hannah recited a prayer she had learned, and that she is not the original author of this prayer. That does not make the prayer any less powerful and heartfelt.

11. In verse 1 Hannah exalts in the Lord (rejoices). What reasons are given for her rejoicing? How would you describe the "salvation" she refers to?
12. Verse 2 focuses on the character of God. What is highlighted here?
13. Verse 3 gives a call for humility. Who might come to mind as you read this verse from our story?
14. In verse 4-8 we read how God reverses the fortunes of people. Describe some of the reversals mentioned here. Which verse seems to apply most to Hannah's situation? What is the point of all this? (cf. vs 8 "For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and on them he set the world.")
15. What encouragement comes from verse 9 for those who strive to remain faithful to God?
16. Verse 10 introduces an interesting theme, that of a king. At this time there was no king (though the nation did desire one). What noteworthy word is used of the king in verse 10? Who does this instantly make us think about?

Conclusion:

Hannah's story is one of great faith. She trusted God with her need – crying out in anguish in the temple because she desired a child. She trusted the response of the priest when he said God had heard her prayer. She trusted that God was a good god who would bring good to her life. She trusted her precious son into the hands of God, taking him back to the temple to be raised by the priests. This was

¹ Kevin J. Mellish, 1 & 2 Samuel: New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2012), pp. 49-50.

not a practice usually done. Hannah simply felt this was the best way to fulfill her vow to give her son to the Lord all the days of his life (1:11).

And then she prayed an amazing song of praise to God that points us to a song that would be sung by a maiden of Nazareth many years in the future. This maiden would also marvel at the workings of a God who lifts the humble, and humbles the proud. It would be sung by the mother who would be entrusted to care for the anointed one, the Messiah.

May we see that the characteristics that set people apart in the Old Testament to be vessels through which God could work are the same to this day. People of faith and obedience who are aware of the workings of God around them are still vessels God can work through today. It was not because of their wealth, prestige or even lineage. It was all about faith and faithfulness. May that be true in our lives as well.