

## **Hannah—A godly mother**

**Intro:** A few weeks ago we looked one of the great characters in our Bible reading—Samuel. I hope I communicated to you the profound importance of Samuel the prophet in the history of God’s people. He was one of the great men of the ages.

**But as you have no doubt heard, “Behind every great man is a great woman.” That is often said about wives who lovingly and sacrificially help their husbands.” But it can equally be said about mothers who raise sons and daughters who achieve greatness.**

**Behind the great man Samuel was a great mother, Hannah. Tonight let’s look at the story behind the story and see how Hannah demonstrated great motherhood and character worth emulating. Let’s turn to 1 Samuel 1.**

**God often brings about great things out of bad circumstances; and Hannah is an excellent example of that. In this case, He accomplished great things through:**

### **Hannah’s barrenness**

#### **Hannah bore the reproach of having no children.**

*Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. (1 Sam. 1:1-2)*

If we hear that through modern ears there might be various actions.

It might be heard as a minor misfortune; but nothing to get too worked up about.

For those who deeply want children and can’t have them, it would be heard with all the sympathy that they feel in being unable to have children.

But in Hannah’s world, not being able to give her husband children brought reproach upon her. It might be understood as a sign of God’s disfavor. It reduced a woman’s worth in the culture, since having a large family was a necessary part of the economy of the ancient world. Also it raised concern about future care in case a husband should die.

#### **Her husband sought in vain to console her by special favors**

*Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were priests to the Lord there. And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the Lord had closed her womb. (1 Sam. 1:3-5)*

The author alludes to the custom of sacrifice where the worshipper kept a part of the sacrifice for a sacrificial meal in the presence of the Lord.

Elkanah, knowing Hannah's pain and because he loved her, sought to console her by showing her his favor by giving her double portions of the sacrifice.

Yet all his efforts could not compensate or overpower what the prophet attributes to God—"the Lord had closed her womb."

**Her rival Penninah used her barrenness as a source of provocation.**

*Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. And it happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she would provoke her, so she wept and would not eat. (1 Samuel 1:6-7)*

First I should explain that it was acceptable under the Mosaic Law for a man to take more than one wife. However, it opens up the possibility of the kind of rivalry that this text describes, just as it had done with the wives of Jacob many years before.

Penninah had been blessed with "sons and daughters" while Hannah had none. She used this circumstance to provoke and frustrate Hannah to tears. Every year Hannah could only look forward to more humiliation from Penninah.

**Her husband's attempts to console her were inadequate to relieve her pain.**

Give Elkanah credit for trying; but clearly, like many men since that time, he didn't understand women.

*Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" (1 Sam. 1:8)*

Why did she have to respond so emotionally to everything? Elkanah could not understand how his love would not compensate for Hannah's inability to have children.

**Hannah's prayer to God**

**It may be the prophet Samuel who tells the story of his own birth. It is a touching scene. Hannah arises from the sacrificial meal and separates herself from the painful taunting that she once again was to experience. She draws near to the door of the tabernacle and with deep emotion prays silently to God, only moving her lips as the painful words flowed from her heart:**

*In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, "O 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, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head." (1 Sam. 1:10-11)*

**Hannah's prayer reveals several things about her:**

We see her great faith in God.

She appeals to God's power—Lit. in the Hebrew text, Hannah speaks using the personal of name of God and the expression “of hosts.” The reference could be to the stars in the heaven. If so, then Hannah is remembering that she is speaking to the one who made the heavens and all that is in them. “Hosts” could refer to God's angels as His army. If so, it is reminder that God himself is a king who marshals His armies for the victory of His kingdom.

She appeals to God's compassion—“look upon your servant's misery.”

We see her willingness to put herself at God's disposal.

She refers to herself as God's “servant.”

We see her willingness to sacrifice.

Imagine praying for God to give you something which you will in turn give up. Hannah is willing to be a mother if only by seeing her son once a year at the tabernacle.

Some readers would not understand why she would make the statement, “no razor will ever be used on his head.” Hannah refers to the law of the Nazirite found in Numbers. The law of the Nazirite vow provided for someone to consecrate a person to God's service and indicate that special role by not cutting one's hair nor drinking any product of the grapevine for the entire time of the vow.

**Interestingly, the prophet tells us that Eli the priest is sitting at the door of the temple, close enough to see Hannah's lips moving but clearly hearing no words from her mouth. (v. 9, 12-13). He scolds her for being inebriated (v. 14); but she protests by saying:**

*“Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman; for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation.” (1 Sam. 1:16)*

**Upon hearing this, Eli expresses his good wishes that God will answer the prayer. Hannah respectfully also seeks for Eli to look with favor upon her and add his prayers to hers:**

*And she said, “Let your maidservant find favor in your sight.” So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. (1 Sam. 1:18)*

**What faith Hannah shows; and what a demonstration of the ability of prayer to change our whole way of looking at things.**

*“Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer that calls me from a world of care and bids me at my father's throne make all my wants and wishes known; In seasons of distress and grief my soul has often found relief and oft' escaped the tempters snare, by thy return, sweet hour of prayer.”*

### **God's answer to Hannah**

*... and the Lord remembered her. And it came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, “Because I have asked him of the Lord.” (1 Samuel 1:19-20)*

**Having completed their time of worship Elkanah and Hannah returned home; and God “remembered” Hannah (a word in the Hebrew OT for God’s acts of providence).**

**Hannah gave birth to a son whom she named “Samuel.”**

Hannah had asked God for a son and God had heard. In Hebrew then she named her son “Samuel” (Heard of God)

Every time Samuel’s name was mentioned it was a reminder that he was an answer to prayer.

**And then she did what any loving mother would find incredibly difficult to do. She brought him to the house of the Lord and revealed to Eli that this was the child that she had prayed for a few years before. And now she is fulfilling her vow by dedicating him to the Lord according to the Law with the appropriate sacrifices.**

### **Hannah’s Praise to God**

**1 Samuel 2 records a beautiful poem of praise to God of a prophetic character.**

*Then Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in the Lord; My horn is exalted in the Lord, my mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, because I rejoice in Thy salvation. (1 Samuel 2:1)*

**Hannah exults in God who sees the righteousness of the humble and the arrogance of the wicked and reverses the fortunes of each. What God has done for her portends what He will do for all the nation. She knows that God’s purposes will be performed and that deliverance will arise from the king which God will give the nation. Amazingly her son Samuel would grow up to be a great prophet and the one who would anoint Israel’s first and second king.**

**Hannah would go back home with him. She would return to see Samuel year by year taking along with her a little robe that she made for him (1 Sam. 2:19).**

**Eli acknowledged the sacrifice that Hannah had made and offered his priestly blessing that Hannah might have other children:**

*And the Lord visited Hannah; and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew before the Lord. (1 Samuel 2:21)*

**Samuel would become the great man of God that we talked about a few weeks ago; but there would have been no Samuel without the great faith of a mother willing to sacrifice all.**

### **Lessons from Hannah**

**Hannah’s story shows us how God may use our trials to elevate our faith to more noble purposes. When you are going through life’s trials and disappointments, think about the possibility of what God may still do through you!**

**We see how God can intervene in the lives of His people, responding to their prayers and working through them to accomplish His purposes.**

**We can see a mother's desire that her son be a servant of God. If only every child could have parents with such aspirations as Hannah! And if I may speak as a preacher: How great it would be if more parents would aspire that their sons grow up to be leaders in the church and teachers of God's word; and that likewise their daughters aspire to be helpers of those who lead and teach and who also use their skills to teach God's word.**

**Conclusion: And so just as we saw great faithfulness in Samuel who through his long life had endured such disappointment, so now we see that same faith in his mother Hannah. And we might wonder if at times Samuel remembered his wonderful mother who had suffered and surrendered so much for his sake.**