



Hannah

Hannah Kept Her Promise

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Overview

HANNAH KEPT HER PROMISE

Her story is told in 1 Samuel 1-2. 45 Hannah's prayer shows us that all we have and receive is on loan from God.

Hannah might have had many excuses for being a possessive mother. But when God answered her prayer, she followed through on her promise to dedicate Samuel to God's service.

She discovered that the greatest joy in having a child is to give that child fully and freely back to God.

She entered motherhood prepared to do what all mothers must eventually do—let go of their children.

When children are born, they are completely dependent upon their parents for all their basic necessities.

This causes some parents to forget that those same children will grow toward independence within the span of a few short years.

Elkanah and his family

1 Samuel 1:1-8

There was a man named Elkanah who lived in Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim. He was the son of Jeroham and grandson of Elihu, from the family of Tohu and the clan of Zuph.

Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, while Hannah did not.

Each year Elkanah and his family would travel to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at the Tabernacle.

The priests of the Lord at that time were the two sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas.

On the day Elkanah presented his sacrifice, he would give portions of the sacrifice to Peninnah and each of her children. But he gave Hannah a special portion because he loved her very much, even though the Lord had given her no children.

But Peninnah made fun of Hannah because the Lord had closed her womb.

Year after year it was the same—Peninnah would taunt Hannah as they went to the Tabernacle. Hannah would finally be reduced to tears and would not even eat.

"What's the matter, Hannah?" Elkanah would ask. "Why aren't you eating? Why be so sad just because you have no children? You have me—isn't that better than having ten sons?"

Elkanah kept up his attendance at God's altar, notwithstanding the unhappy differences in his family. If the devotions of a family prevail not to put an end to its divisions, yet let not the divisions put a stop to the devotions.

To abate our just love to any relation for the sake of any infirmity which they cannot help, and which is their affliction, is to make God's providence quarrel with his precept, and very unkindly to add affliction to the afflicted.

It is evidence of a base disposition, to delight in grieving those who are of a sorrowful spirit, and in putting those out of humour who are apt to fret and be uneasy.

We ought to bear one another's burdens, not add to them. Hannah could not bear the provocation.

Those who are of a fretful spirit, and are apt to lay provocations too much to heart, are enemies to themselves, and strip themselves of many comforts both of life and godliness.

Hanna's Prayer

1 Samuel 1:9-18

Once when they were at Shiloh, Hannah went over to the Tabernacle after supper to pray to the Lord. Eli the priest was sitting at his customary place beside the entrance.

Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the Lord. And she made this vow: "O Lord Almighty, if you will look down upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the Lord, his hair will never be cut."

As she was praying to the Lord, Eli watched her. Seeing her lips moving but hearing no sound, he thought she had been drinking. "Must you come here drunk?" he demanded. "Throw away your wine!"

"Oh no, sir!" she replied, "I'm not drunk! But I am very sad, and I was pouring out my heart to the Lord. Please don't think I am a wicked woman! For I have been praying out of great anguish and sorrow."

"In that case," Eli said, "cheer up! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" she exclaimed. Then she went back and began to eat again, and she was no longer sad.

Hannah mingled tears with her prayers; she considered the mercy of our God, who knows the troubled soul.

God gives us leave, in prayer, not only to ask good things in general, but to mention that special good thing we most need and desire.

She spoke softly, none could hear her. Hereby she testified her belief of God's knowledge of the heart and its desires.

Eli was high priest, and judge in Israel. It ill becomes us to be rash and hasty in censures of others, and to think people guilty of bad things while the matter is doubtful and unproved.

Hannah did not retort the charge, and upbraid Eli with the wicked conduct of his own sons.

Eli was willing to acknowledge his mistake. Hannah went away with satisfaction of mind. She had herself by prayer committed her case to God, and Eli had prayed for her.

Prayer is heart's ease to a gracious soul. Prayer will smooth the countenance; it should do so. None will long remain miserable, who use aright the privilege of going to the mercy-seat of a reconciled God in Christ Jesus.

Samuel was born to Hannah and dedicated him to God.

1 Samuel 1:19-28

The entire family got up early the next morning and went to worship the Lord once more.

Then they returned home to Ramah. When Elkanah slept with Hannah, the Lord remembered her request, and in due time she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I asked the Lord for him."

The next year Elkanah, Peninnah, and their children went on their annual trip to offer a sacrifice to the Lord.

But Hannah did not go. She told her husband, "Wait until the baby is weaned. Then I will take him to the Tabernacle and leave him there with the Lord permanently."

"Whatever you think is best," Elkanah agreed. "Stay here for now, and may the Lord help you keep your promise." So she stayed home and nursed the baby.

When the child was weaned, Hannah took him to the Tabernacle in Shiloh. They brought along a three-year-old bull for the sacrifice and half a bushel of flour and some wine.

After sacrificing the bull, they took the child to Eli. "Sir, do you remember me?" Hannah asked. "I am the woman who stood here several years ago praying to the Lord.

I asked the Lord to give me this child, and he has given me my request. Now I am giving him to the Lord, and he will belong to the Lord his whole life." And they worshiped the Lord there.

Elkanah and his family had a journey before them, and a family of children to take with them, yet they would not move till they had worshipped God together.

Prayer and provender do not hinder a journey.

When men are in such haste to set out upon journeys, or to engage in business, that they have not time to worship God, they are likely to proceed without his presence and blessing.

Hannah, though she felt a warm regard for the courts of God's house, begged to stay at home. God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. Those who are detained from public ordinances, by the nursing and tending of little children, may take comfort from this instance, and believe, that if they do that duty in a right spirit, God will graciously accept them therein.

Hannah presented her child to the Lord with a grateful acknowledgment of his goodness in answer to prayer.

Whatever we give to God, it is what we have first asked and received from him. All our gifts to him were first his gifts to us. The child Samuel early showed true piety.

Little children should be taught to worship God when very young. Their parents should teach them in it, bring them to it, and put them on doing it as well as they can; God will graciously accept them, and will teach them to do better.

Hannah sings a song of praise.

1 Samuel 2:1-10

And Hannah prayed, and said, my heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord kills, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifts up. He raised up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them.

He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

Hannah's heart rejoiced, not in Samuel, but in the Lord. She looks beyond the gift, and praises the Giver.

She rejoiced in the salvation of the Lord, and in expectation of His coming, who is the whole salvation of his people. The strong are soon weakened, and the weak are soon strengthened, when God pleases.

God respects not man's wisdom or fancied excellences, but chooses those whom the world accounts foolish, teaching them to feel their guilt, and to value his free and precious salvation.

This prophecy looks to the kingdom of Christ, that kingdom of grace, of which Hannah speaks, after having spoken largely of the kingdom of providence.

And here is the first time that we meet with the name MESSIAH, or his Anointed. The subjects of Christ's kingdom will be safe, and the enemies of it will be ruined; for the Anointed, the Lord Christ, is able to save, and to destroy.

Hannah visits Samuel at the temple each year.

1 Samuel 2:18-19

But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.

Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

Samuel, being devoted to the Lord in a special manner, was from a child employed about the sanctuary in the services he was capable of.

As he did this with a pious disposition of mind, it was called ministering unto the Lord. He received a blessing from the Lord.

Those young people who serve God as well as they can, he will enable to improve, that they may serve him better.

Children of Hannah

1 Samuel 2:20

And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give you seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home.

Life Applications

We must gradually let go of our children in order to allow them to become mature, interdependent adults. All children should be dedicated to the Lord.

Being sensitive to the different stages of that healthy process will greatly strengthen family relationships; resisting or denying that process will cause great pain.

Key verses: “And she said to him, ‘As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord’ ” (1 Samuel 1:26-28).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Verse Concept: Matthew Henry's Concept Bible Commentary.