

GREAT PRAYERS SERIES

HANNAH'S PRAYER SONG
I Samuel 2:1-10

We have heard of “Head Start” school programs run by the government in concert with private organizations. Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children. Our children deserve a Head Start – in the right direction¹

There is no better way for children to get a Head Start than to have a godly mother. Behind Moses was his mother Jochebed; behind John the Baptist, an Elizabeth; behind Timothy was a Eunice, and, as we shall see, behind Samuel, a Hannah. There is nothing so wonderful in this world, next to the love of Christ, as the love of a godly mother.

Hannah was the wife of Elkanah and she had no children, for as the scriptural account states, *“the LORD had closed her womb.”* (I Sam. 1:5) In her sadness and out of her intense desire to have a child, she turned to the Lord and poured out her soul’s desire in a prayer for a child. (I Sam. 1:10-18) She made a vow that if the Lord would give to her a son, she would give him back to the Lord for service to Him as long as he lived.

The Lord was gracious and honored her request by giving her a son whom she named “Samuel.” The Hebrew is “Shemuel” and means *“heard of God.”* The result was that there was a flood of joy that overwhelmed Hannah’s soul and resulted in a most remarkable prayer in song. I Samuel chapter 1: 10-18 records her prayer:

“And Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation. “No one is holy like the LORD, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God. “Talk no more so very proudly; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, for the LORD is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed. “The bows of the mighty men are broken, and those who stumbled are girded with strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, And the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, and she who has many children has become feeble. “The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory. “For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s, and He has set the world upon them. He will guard the feet of His saints, but the wicked shall be silent in darkness. “For by strength no man shall prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. “He will give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed.” (I Samuel 2:1-10)

Note the contrast between this prayer in chapter two and her prayer in chapter one:

- In chapter 1 – her prayer was silent; in chapter 2 – her prayer is audible;
- In chapter 1 – is her prayer request; in chapter 2 – is her prayer response;
- In chapter 1 – is her prayer of petition; in chapter 2 – is her prayer of praise.

Spurgeon wrote, "When she had obtained her desire she did not desist from prayer, but the rather she was encouraged to abound in it. Her prayers, however, were no longer salted with sorrow, but were sweetened with the spices of gratitude. She rose from prayer to praise."

"When Hannah gave away that for which she had prayed most deeply and which she treasured most closely, the moment was explosive with joy. Getting her child from the Lord was a happy day; giving him to the Lord, even happier. To our great surprise we hear Hannah singing and praying about her incomparable God and His incredible ways."
(Eugene Peterson)

Hannah's prayer is praise, it is poetic, it is prophetic. A closer look at Hannah's prayer song reveals much about Hannah as well as Hannah's God.

HANNAH ACKNOWLEDGES GOD'S PROVISION.

"And Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation." (1 Sam.2:1)

Hannah Responds To The Lord Who Answered Her.

"And Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD."

Here we sense the overflowing joy of Hannah's holy heart. The mercy she had received was an answer to prayer and she was not an ingrate. The joy she now had because she was the mother of a fine son was exceeded only by the joy she derived from the goodness and kindness of the Lord who had bestowed him upon her. She was careful in her praise-prayer to speak first of the Lord saying, "*My heart rejoices in the LORD.*" She did not say, "*I rejoice in my son.*" She did not praise the gift but the Giver; she went directly to the source of her joy – Jehovah!

The phrase, "*My horn is exalted in the LORD*" mean "*my power is great in the Lord.*" The horn is the symbol of strength, and is taken from oxen whose strength is in their horns. The gift she had received called for just such a response as Hannah gave.

Hannah References The Enemies Who Criticized Her.

"I smile at my enemies"

She is saying, "Now I can answer those that criticized my barrenness." A barren woman was a second-class citizen in the society of that day. She had heard the snide remarks and the snickers of women with children on the roadways and in the market places. Now she was no longer looked down upon. She could hold her head high and smile at those who had been her enemies.

Hannah Rejoices In Salvation That God Gave Her.

"because I rejoice in Your salvation."

This statement explains the source of Hannah's praise-prayer. It flowed out of the heart of one who had experienced the salvation of the Lord. Thanksgiving is an essential part of

prayer and Hannah's gratitude to God is beautifully worded. However, it is very interesting that there is no direct reference to Samuel in the prayer. She is completely absorbed in praise to God; He is the source of her blessing and the focus of her faith. He is her salvation.

Unlike the nine lepers in Luke chapter 17 who did not return to thank Jesus for their healing, Hannah returns to God with a heart overflowing with gratitude and praise. Her prayer example is a challenge to us to be mindful of the Source of our blessings, and not be focused solely upon the substance of the blessings. Although Hannah cherished Samuel, she keeps her priorities in order. The gift is not greater than the Giver.

HANNAH ADORES GOD'S PERSON. vs.2-10

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45) and Hannah's heart was full. What she first speaks tells us volumes about the depth of her understanding of God. In verses 2-10, Hannah mentions four qualities about God's person in which she exults:

Hannah Exalts God because of His Greatness.

"No one is holy like the LORD, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, For the LORD is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed." (1 Sam.2:2, 3)

His Holiness.

"No one is holy like the LORD...."

As she draws near to the throne of God in prayerful praise she begins by mentioning His holiness and praises the Lord as the only Holy One. It is remarkable, but not surprising, that Hannah's first statement as to the nature of God, concerns His holiness. When Moses came before God at the burning bush, God said to him, *"the place where you stand is holy ground."* (Exodus 3:5) Hannah realized that she was on holy ground in the presence of God.

His Sovereignty.

"For there is none besides You...."

His Strength.

"Nor is there any rock like our God."

His Knowledge.

"For the LORD is the God of knowledge...."

His Justice.

"And by Him actions are weighed."

Hannah Extols God because of His Government.

"The bows of the mighty men are broken, And those who stumbled are girded with strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, And the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, And she who has many children has become feeble. The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The

LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory.” (I Sam. 2:4-8)

Hannah Esteems God For His Guardianship.

“He will guard the feet of His saints, but the wicked shall be silent in darkness.” (I Sam. 2:9)

Hannah acknowledged that God will graciously treat His saints and keep their feet from slipping, guarding their steps throughout life.

HANNAH ANNOUNCES GOD’S PROGRAM.

“The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king, And exalt the horn of His anointed.” (I Sam. 2:10)

“This is a most remarkable passage, containing a clear and distinct prophecy of the Kingdom and glory of the Christ of God.” – Barnes

Hannah ends her prayer song with a prophetic and Messianic note. “Hannah's prayer rises up to a prophetic glance at the consummation of the kingdom of God.” (K&D) After acknowledging the Lord’s provision and adoring the Lord’s Person, she announces God’s program. The One Who rules on earth, judges the ends of the earth, gives strength to His king and exalts the horn of His anointed must do so universally and in perpetuity. And here is the first time that we meet with the name “Messiah” or “His Anointed.” As there was no king in Israel at the time, it seems that the best interpretation is a reference to Christ.

“The word ‘*annointed*’ is in the last line of the prayer it creates an anticipation, preparing us for what is coming Hannah is presented as praying more than she knew. Anticipating the annointed king Saul, anticipating the annointed king David....anticipating Jesus, who is God’s annointed heir to the throne. A thousand years later Mary took this same song and personalized it to sing her joyful witness to the Child in her womb who would bring salvation to the world. (Luke 1:46-55)” (Eugene Peterson – *The Message Conversations*, I Sam.2)

Conclusion

Hannah indeed was a godly woman and her knowledge of God is revealed in her prayer. It is no wonder that Samuel was such a great prophet. Hanna was a model mother. Any mother of the spiritual stature of Hannah will train up their children in the way they should go. They can believe God that their children who will glorify God and impact society for good.

JdonJ