

A Mother's Wisdom

1 Samuel 1:1-10

There was a spring in Hannah's step as she walked the dusty road back home from Shiloh. And a few months later, there was a smile on her face. God remembered the prayer she sobbed out at the tabernacle. She was going to have baby.

She named the baby Samuel. And she was overjoyed. But even in her elation, she did not forget the promise she had made to God.

Her son would serve the living God all his life. And that included his childhood. So when little Samuel was weaned, she and her husband took him to Shiloh and left him with Eli, the old priest.

But that was not all Hannah did. While she was there, she also scrawled down a prayer of praise.

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 Your salvation." Verse 1

It should come as no surprise that Hannah rejoiced in the eternal salvation God had given her. After all, that was the real heart of her prayer. She wanted a child as proof positive that God really had accepted her and gathered her into His arms.

Of course, Hannah was filled with thanksgiving for the gift God gave her. She dearly loved the little boy her Lord allowed her to have. But her praise was centered not upon God's gifts, but on the Giver Himself.

There is no one holy like the Lord, indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God. Verse 2

Hannah's heart overflowed with joy and jubilation because she had come to know and love so great a God. Her son was a wonderful gift. But God Himself is His greatest gift.

Still, this mother's prayer was not limited to praise and thanksgiving. Looking back on her road to faith, she saw how God had dealt her. And she understood that is how God always deals men.

It is how He deals with us today.

God and Enemies

Hannah praised God that she no longer feared her enemies. In fact, she was so free from her foes, she boldly spoke against them.

Those enemies were not human beings, either. Her husband's other wife looked upon Hannah as an adversary and enemy. But the resentment and rivalry was one sided. Hannah harbored no hatred for Penninah.

No, Hannah had already faced down her real enemies. For the long months and years she was childless, she battled adversaries that were determined to keep her in sorrow and regret. And those enemies are the same ones we face.

Boast no more so very proudly, do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; Verse 3

Pride is always the greatest enemy those who would come to God must overcome. It is the empty, false pride of believing the foolish fallacy that we are

so strong and self-sufficient, we do not need God. Our Creator calls that arrogance. And He cannot abide it.

No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure. Psalm 101:5

Because our Lord is a God of truth, He hates all lies. And there is no more monstrous lie than believing we do not need God.

Hannah understood that everything we have in this world comes from God. Warm houses, full refrigerators, and fat bank accounts all come from the great eternal God who created us.

The Lord makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. Verse 7

God is the one who allows men to gain riches. And the same is true of any advantage we have in life. If our bodies are whole and healthy, it is because God has protected us. If our minds are clear and concise, that is also His gift.

There is absolutely nothing we can have in life that does not come from God. Sound and stable children come from Him. So does our every strength and ability. And it is foolish to take pride in that which we did nothing to gain.

Hannah would urge us to turn away from believing we are independent and self-sustaining. Indeed, this mother would have us refuse to trust in any earthly advantage we might have.

She spoke first of morality. We dare not take pride in our obedience to God's commandments and any good deeds we might have done.

After all, only God is holy. And that isn't all. He is also a God of knowledge.

Boast no more so very proudly, do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and with Him actions are weighed. Verse 3

Nothing escapes the eye of the great God of eternity. He not only weighs our actions. He also reads our hearts and knows our motives. And He knows how pure we really are.

We might also take pride in the strength of our minds, our bodies, and our ability to influence others. But that too comes from God.

The bows of the mighty are shattered, Verse 4
...not by might shall a man prevail. Verse 9

Hannah was definite. She repeated it every way she could. We dare not trust in any earthly advantage. Anything on earth we are foolish enough to trust in for strength and security will eventually let us down.

Riches, for instance. We cannot trust in them. Money will not sustain us. Hannah insisted that those of us whose bank accounts and refrigerators are full now will be reduced to desperate need.

Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, Verse 5

Strength of mind and body will not sustain us, either. God will shatter the strongest of those who are proud and independent. Even our families are not a haven of security.

...she who has many children languishes Verse 5

Ancient women wanted children to provide for them in their old age. But Hannah wrote that those who hang their hope on their children will pine away

in sorrow and want in their old age.

The children of some will die. Other sons and daughters will simply leave home and forget their parents.

The same is true of anything we rely upon for security in this world. There simply is no other rock of refuge and source of security but God.

...there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God. Verse 2

Our greatest enemy in this life is our own swelling pride. If we do not conquer it, we will never taste the joy of knowing God.

...though the Lord is exalted, yet He regards the lowly, but the haughty He knows from afar. Psalm 138:6

That was the mistake half-hearted church members at Laodicea made. They took pride in their wealth and were arrogant in their foolish belief that they needed nothing.

...because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Revelation 3:16_17 (ESV)

Do not be deceived. All our pride is a myth. It is entertaining a lie. And that sickens our Savior.

Hannah delighted that she had come to know the pure and perfect Lord who loved her. She rejoiced only in the fact that He had given her salvation. Then and now, that is the only thing worth boasting about.

Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord. Jeremiah 9:23_24

God and Exaltation

Throughout Hannah's prayer a pattern prevails. Again and again, she describes downward movements by men.

The strong are shattered. The rich are reduced to laboring for bread. And those who depend upon children for security and stability are disappointed.

But coupled with each dire, downward plunge is an opposite, upward movement. While those who are proud are brought to shame, those who are humble receive great grace from God.

God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. 1 Peter 5:5

Hannah began by contrasting those who trust in their strength with those who know they have no strength.

The bows of the mighty are shattered, but the feeble gird on strength. Verse 4

She continued by contrasting those who believe they are rich with those who have nothing.

Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, but those who were

hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven, but she who has many children languishes. Verse 5

Finally, those who base their happiness and security upon their families are set against those who are barren.

Hannah realized she did not come to know God and reap His bountiful blessings until she fell down on her knees and sobbed out her heart to God. Only when she came to the Lord in abject need, did she discover how eager He was to hear and to help her.

And the same is true of us. The message in this mother's prayer is that God is highly selective about who He helps. He never pours His powerful presence and glorious grace into people who will not admit their desperate need of Him.

In the Bible, a *horn* is a symbol of strength. But Hannah was not thrilled merely because her strength was exalted.

...my horn is exalted in the Lord, Verse 1

Samuel's mother knew God was the One who had given her an inner strength. And He had done so because she knew she was feeble and utterly without strength.

The bows of the mighty are shattered, but the feeble gird on strength. Verse 4

So if we would know the power of God within our lives, we cannot indulge the myth that we are already strong and self-sustaining. If we would know our Savior's strength, we must admit we are weak.

The same principle applies to riches. God does not grant His power and presence to those who believe they have everything they need. He helps only those who realize how poor they really are.

He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles, and inherit a seat of honor; Verse 8

In the Sermon on the Mount our Savior said the very same thing.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3

The images Hannah offered are extreme. God only comes to the aid of those who look at their lives and see nothing but death, decay and dust. He exalts and empowers only those who see their lives as little more than a pile of manure, reeking and rotting in the sun.

There is no other way. If we are to come to God, we must see ourselves as He sees us. As we really are.

God and Eternity

There is a strong strain of prophecy in Hannah's prayer. Centuries before God's Son walked out of His garden grave into the spring sunlight, this mother knew her God gives life, even to cold corpses.

The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. Verse 6

Death is never an accident. God's Word is definite about that. Our eternal Lord is the One who determines when men die.

See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand. Deuteronomy 32:39

No power on earth, no wonder drug or miracle medicine can deliver us from God's hand. He holds our lives in the palm of His hand. He alone decides when our days on this earth will end.

Ancient Jewish commentators believed Hannah's proclamation that God both puts to death and raises men up from the place of the dead also includes a deeper meaning. They wrote that this verse also means God will raise up every human being to an eternal life of either torment and terror or of bliss and blessing.

That idea is woven into the fabric of this mother's prayer. She warns that while God is full of love and compassion, He is also a holy God. And as a holy, righteous God, He will sit as every man's judge. He weighs our works, even as He reads our minds and judges our motives.

...with Him actions are weighed. Verse 3

Those who contend with the Lord will be shattered; against them He will thunder in the heavens, the Lord will judge the ends of the earth; Verse 10

In God's eyes, those who refuse the kindness and compassion, the forgiveness and freedom, and the peace and purity He offers all men are treating Him like an enemy. They wage war against Him.

And no human being is strong enough to stand against God. He will utterly shatter the strongest of men.

...the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; for not by might shall a man prevail.

Jesus used the words *outer darkness* described the eternal destiny of those who refuse to trust in His blood. It will be, He said, a place where the only sounds are the weeping and wailing of agony and despair.

It will be, Hannah wrote, a place where every argument men have entertained against God will be silenced. None who are plunged into that pit will not be able to find fault with the eternal Father. They cannot say He did not warn them. They cannot say He made salvation too difficult and demanding. And they cannot say He was short on patience.

Always dying but never dead, those who refuse God's pleas today will have an endless eternity of torment to curse their foolishness. And, writing long before David was born, Hannah hinted at the reason why God's justice will be so severe.

He will give strength to His King, and will exalt the horn of His Anointed. Verse 10

Hebrew literature was based on parallel statements. A truth was coupled with a repetition of the same idea, expanding and adding to the it. That is what Hannah did here.

She spoke of God's King more than a generation before Saul became Israel's

first ruler. Still, she could be prophesying of David's godly reign. But her expanding statement makes that impossible.

In Hebrew, the word *Anointed* is *Messiah*. In the Greek version of the Old Testament, it is *Christ*. That is why ancient Jewish commentators all agreed that this verse speaks of the Promised One God would one day send to this earth.

We know it refers to Jesus our Savior. He loves us so much He laid down His life for us. And with His own blood, He paid for all our sins.

It so grieved God to see His Son suffer for sin, He darkened the skies over Calvary the day Jesus died. And He will not have mercy upon anyone who does not gladly receive the free gift of eternal salvation His Son purchased for us with such agony.

But there is hope in Hannah's prayer. She not only spoke of those who proudly stand against God. She also spoke of the godly.

He keeps the feet of His godly ones, Verse 9

The word translated *godly ones* is the noun form of a word that means *loyalty in love*. In the end, that is what God asks of us.

He would have us to trust Him: to stand for Him and with Him as loyal, faithful children. And He would have us do so not for any blessing or benefit He might give us in return. But simply because we love Him. Jesus said that is the great commandment of the Bible.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. Matthew 22:37_38

This mother's prayer assures us that, when we do choose to love and trust only and always and ever in Christ and in Him alone, God will make sure that we will make it to His shining celestial city.

We might stumble as we walk the straight and narrow way of faith in Jesus, but we will not utterly fail.

The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand. Psalm 37:23_24

Surely, that is the greatest blessing of all God gives to the poor and needy who come to Him.

God Himself holds our hand.