



## 2 | 1 SAMUEL 1:17-2:10

### GOD OF ANSWERED PRAYER

*The most important thing that prayer changes is not our circumstances,  
but prayer changes our hearts.*

#### Outline

1. **PRAYER RESTORES OUR HOPE (1:17-18)**
2. **PRAYER GIVES US A HERITAGE (1:19-28)**
  - The Lord Remembers
  - Hannah Surrenders
  - Eli Does Nothing
  - Samuel Arrives
3. **PRAYER INVITES OUR HIGHEST PRAISE (2:1-10)**
  - God Alone is to be Praised
  - Praise Him for Spiritual Victory
  - Praise Him for Salvation
  - Praise Him for Spiritual Stability
  - Praise Him for His Sovereignty
  - Praise Him for His Justice
  - Praise Him for His Son Jesus Christ

#### Call to Worship

Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! For the Lord, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth. —*Psalm 47:1-2*

#### Songs

*Lord I Need You*

*Sweet Hour of Prayer*

*Surrender All (Sovereign Grace Music)*

*Have Thine Own Way Lord*

*How Great is Our God*

## Introduction

We are in a series in the book of 1 Samuel called “Exalting God’s King.” We are learning how to exalt Jesus Christ as King in our lives. Our title this morning is: “God of Answered Prayer”.

My normal method of driving when I was younger was to drive until my car’s gas tank was as near empty as possible. I would stop at a gas station when my gas light turned on. Anytime my wife, Jill, drove my car, she first asked if there was anything in the tank because she knew I would often drive on fumes. One reason I did this is I’ve become comfortable with it. The one time that I actually ran out of gas, one of our deacons (Gavin Barclay) happened to pass by me within a minute of my car dying. He and his wife laughed because they also just happened to have a can of gas in the back of his truck.

I hope I learned from that. Take it from me. I’ve learned you can’t get very far driving around on gas fumes. That’s a very powerless, frustrating way to travel. A lot of Christians are trying to operate their spiritual lives the way I drive my car. They are running on fumes—trying to get somewhere for the Lord without using the fuel that provides the spark that energizes the power of God resident within us through the Holy Spirit.

God is a God who answers prayer. Prayer is one aspect of our fellowship with God where we see God intersect with our lives. We let our request be made known to God, and he answers. The point of prayer is to see God touching our lives, the divine tenderly encouraging us who are broken. The hopeless getting hope; the hurting getting healed. God delights in answering the prayers of his children.

You know the story so far. Hannah was barren. She had no children. To make it worse, her husband Elkanah had married another woman, Peninnah, who bore him many children. And that woman harassed Hannah constantly. She finds herself at God’s altar at Shiloh and she’s crying out to God. Hannah prayed. She poured her soul out to God and left her all on the altar with God.

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup>Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. —1 Samuel 1:12-13

Hannah gave her whole heart to the Lord. She trusted God to answer her. She believed God and left her burden at the altar. Then, something even beautiful happened. Her hope was restored.

**Key Thought:** The most important thing that prayer changes is not our circumstances, but prayer changes our hearts.

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## 1. PRAYER RESTORES OUR HOPE (1:17-18)

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Eli noticed it first. Something had changed in Hannah, and Eli the priest could see it.

1 Samuel 1:17 | Then Eli answered, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.”

Something happened here. There was a change in Hannah’s heart and in her countenance. She had reached the point of surrender. She did not know if or how the Lord would answer her prayer, but she was content in the will of God. She had reached contentment with her husband whether she had children or not.

Even the lukewarm Eli could recognize God's hand, and it was clear to him that God would grant her petition. "Go in shalom" is what Eli told her. Shalom is complete well-being, wholeness. Look at the faith of Hannah.

**1 Samuel 1:18** | And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

Hannah was changed by her sweet fellowship with the Lord. She had prayed in faith, and she knew God would answer. She did not know how, but she trusted in the goodness of God. Hannah's faith was so great that she started eating again. She went back to the double portion her husband Elkanah had given her. There was a marked difference in her face. Saints, isn't it wonderful when the Lord lifts our burdens? There wasn't an immediate change in Hannah's circumstances. That would come later. But her heart was resting and trusting in the Lord, and that makes all the difference.

We learn a lesson here. The great reward of prayer is not stuff or a change of circumstances but God himself. Remember God's promise to Abraham?

Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. —  
*Genesis 15:1, KJV*

Prayer is not just about looking at God as a cosmic vending machine. Hannah's heart was settled even before she ever got an answer. You see, prayer is not about the answer but the fellowship. Prayer is not about getting something, but it's about experiencing the God who loves you. It's really about enjoying his Holy Spirit. Yes, God does give us many tangible answers to prayer, but the process is far more important than the answer.

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## 2. PRAYER GIVES US A HERITAGE (1:19-28)

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Saints, it is vital that we remember that God answers prayer. He does not delight in seeing you stressed out or completely overwhelmed. But it happens to be in those times that we pray best. God doesn't want us to simply try to work things out in our own power, but to trust in him for God-sized answers to prayer.

Our hope is in the Lord alone. He alone can do the impossible. Hannah began this story as a woman who was barren with no heritage. There is nothing too hard for the Lord (Jer 32:27)! Remember, at the end of Hannah's prayer, she's still barren, but her hope is in the Lord. Hope in the Bible is not a wishful desire, but a confident expectation. Hannah was convinced that God had already answered her prayer.

Hannah didn't know what the future would hold, but she trusted the God who holds the future.

Hannah humbled herself before the Lord. That took humility. But answered prayers are a call to live in that same humility in which we asked. For Hannah, that means giving up her precious first-born son. Hannah's reward was that she was not ultimately her son, but the Lord himself. That gave her contentment in God's will, whatever it was. Psalm 113:9 tells us that the Lord, "makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise the Lord." Hannah demonstrated that she was living to please the Lord and not herself when she dedicated her son to the Lord all the days of his life.

## THE LORD REMEMBERS

What is the Lord's heritage? What is his reputation? He's got a perfect record, amen? He is ever faithful and ever true. He never changes. He's always good. And he remembers all our prayers. He promises to answer according to his will.

The Lord knew Hannah's heart. Whatever he had given her, she had given back to him. When we bring our burdens to the Lord, he answers in a way that is "exceeding, abundantly above all that we could ever ask or think" (Eph 3:20). God chooses not to remember our sins, but does remember our burdens, our needs, our desires as they are submitted to him, and he answers!

**1 Samuel 1:19-20** | They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. <sup>20</sup>And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the Lord."

God promises to vindicate his kingdom purposes for you. He will do it in personal ways. For Hannah, that meant the birth of a child. For Anna, later at the dedication of our Lord as an infant at the temple, that meant widowhood and singleness. Both had a place in redemptive history. God will fulfill everything he has promised to you. His plan is to bring people to Christ, and to bring them into conformity to the image of his Son. If you align yourself with God's purposes, he will remember you for his glory and your good. As you attach yourself to the true vine, you as a branch will bear much fruit. Ask whatever you will, as long as your desires are aligned with the Lord's, and it will be given to you (Jn 15:1-7). God will always vindicate his purposes for you. Don't be afraid if those purposes include difficult and even hurtful situations, like Peninnah harassing Hannah. That also was allowed by the Lord. But Hannah received it as from the Lord. It humbled her. And the Lord promises to vindicate all of his humble servants.

## HANNAH SURRENDERS

What is Hannah's heritage? Her legacy is the same as every child of God. She gives everything to the Lord, and the Lord repays beyond all that she could ever hope or imagine. Hannah, like Abraham before her, is willing to give up her son, her only son. Samuel is the firstborn son of a previously barren woman.

**1 Samuel 1:21-24** | The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. <sup>22</sup>But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there forever." <sup>23</sup>Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the Lord establish his word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. <sup>24</sup>And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. And the child was young.

The time came when little Samuel was weaned, around three and a half years of age. It was time to give him up to the Lord. This must have been heart wrenching for Hannah for a number of reasons,

one of which was the character of Eli. He didn't seem to be cued in and connected to the Lord. Look at his own sons. Another was that this was her firstborn and only son at the time. She would have other children later, but she didn't know that at the time.

Hannah and Elkanah left their son in Shiloh and returned to Ramah with joyful hearts and great expectation to see what the Lord would do. What a wonderful thing it is when a husband and wife are dedicated to the Lord, worship him together, pray together, and trust his word.<sup>1</sup> What an amazing thing when married people can give their marriage to the Lord. Have you done that? How vital it is that parents give their children to the Lord. Have you done that? Hannah surrenders that which was everything to her. Listen to David's confession. He wanted to give God everything.

I will not give to the Lord that which costs me nothing. —2 Samuel 24:24

God wants us to sacrifice and give the very best of what we have to him. He deserves it all! We can trust that he will use it in ways we cannot even imagine. Paul, and every Christian, has the same testimony.

Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ. —Philippians 3:8, NLT

Dear saint, don't be afraid to surrender everything to God. Our God loves you, thinks of you continually, and he doesn't get tired, since he is infinite. He is always wanting you to feel his nearness and tender care for you. He will answer beyond what you can imagine. It will always be in a way that is for his ultimate kingdom purposes. You can trust him. Let your soul be at rest in his goodness.

## ELI DOES NOTHING

Eli's heritage is that he's a people pleaser. He's a slave to the idol of his own comfort. Eli surrenders nothing. He's a people pleaser. Eventually he and his sons die in an attack by the Philistines, and the tabernacle is burnt down. Ichabod is written over his life. Ichabod means "the glory has departed." That's what Eli is known for. That makes for weak leadership! Eli's doing what he's always done. He's just a bystander. He's not leading the way. He's not a good gatekeeper. He a space filler.

1 Samuel 1:25-26 | Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. <sup>26</sup> And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord.

It's like God is showing Eli what real sacrifice looks like, but he's daydreaming. There is an atmosphere of surprise. He's shocked to see her again, but this time she has a little boy with her.

## SAMUEL ARRIVES

Samuel's heritage is that he's given to God before he is even born. He will listen to the Lord and serve him all the days of his life. And so begins the rest of the story. Samuel will anoint David (a type of the Messiah) as a very, very old man, close to a hundred years old. But at this moment, Hannah is dedicating Samuel to the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, *Be Successful*, 23.

**1 Samuel 1:27-28** | For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. <sup>28</sup>Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord.”

There is a sense in which Hannah gives up her child. It's a kind of death, quite soon, we find out he's not being raised mainly by Eli, but by God himself. Samuel starts hearing from God instead of Eli. Samuel was given up by his mother for the Lord's redemptive purposes.

The greatest child dedication is that our Father in heaven gave his Son to take the place of sinners like you and me. He died so that you and your children may live. The wages of sin is death. One day our children will be old. They will face judgment day. Are they ready? Are you ready? “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23). Will you surrender your life to Christ today?

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### **3. PRAYER INVITES OUR HIGHEST PRAISE (2:1-10)**

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Now, imagine what you would think, if you were on an airplane, and after being in the air for a few hours, the captain came over the loudspeaker and said, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to flight whatever. We want you to know, however, that for the last three hours, we have not been flying according to radar or any navigational implementation, due to a major malfunction in some key components. So ladies and gentlemen, we're happy that you're on board. But basically, you need to know we're lost, and we have no idea what our final destination will be. But you'll be glad to know we're making excellent time.

You wouldn't be comforted by that kind of an announcement. You would be dismayed—up in the air, not knowing where you're going, leaving it up to just a pilot looking for a landing strip later on. That is the predicament that the nation of Israel finds itself in on the pages of 1 Samuel. They are off course. They're in a very difficult period of their history. Yet Hannah is right on course with God. She is focused on God despite the weak leadership and the sinful and rebellious culture around her. In a truly dark time, she is able to give God the highest praise.

God truly is good, isn't he? His good heart invites our highest praise! We cannot be happy as human beings until a spirit of gratitude and joy takes hold of our soul. That is only possible through a constant gaze of Jesus' beauty and glory. Hannah has an actual glimpse not only of Israel's future king, but of the ultimate king, Jesus himself.

#### **GOD ALONE IS TO BE PRAISED**

**1 Samuel 2:1a** | And Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in the Lord.”

This beautiful prayer has come to be known as the “song of Hannah.” So different from her earlier prayer, this is a hymn of joy. It's a prayer not of desperation but of delight and praise. Clearly, Hannah understood the birth of Samuel as something more than her personal vindication and blessing. She knew that when the Lord started opening barren wombs, he was beginning to act for his people.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Leithart, *A Son to Me*, 42.

## PRAISE HIM FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY

1 Samuel 2:1b | My horn is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies.

Hannah uses the language of spiritual warfare. In all her praise (“my heart exults in the Lord”, 1:1a), she is like an animal who has just conquered her prey (“my horn is exalted in the Lord”, 1:1b). The idea is that the animal’s horn is its glory and power, held high, in triumph after goring an enemy into submission.<sup>3</sup> The war imagery goes on in verse 2, “My mouth derides my enemies” is a translation that is a bit too tame. The Hebrew idea goes much further. It’s more like, “my mouth is gaping open ready to devour my enemies.”<sup>4</sup>

We might think that the enemy is Peninnah, and certainly in a superficial sense Peninnah was a hostile enemy to Hannah. But I don’t think Hannah is so superficial or petty. Her enemy and ours is not flesh and blood (Eph 6:11-12) but is the demonic system of rebellion that had been crushing Israel during the time of the judges and rendering them cold to God. After Hannah had prayed, she was at peace and demonstrated God’s shalom in her life. When we take up the shield of faith, the enemy is resisted and can no longer harass us (Jas 4:7).

## PRAISE HIM FOR SALVATION

1 Samuel 2:1c | Because I rejoice in your salvation.

The point of this spiritual warfare language is this victory leads to God’s “salvation.” Hannah has taken on the role of a prophetess. She sees that this child born to her has something to do with God’s plan of salvation for Israel and the world. This child, Samuel, will, in his old age, anoint God’s king for Israel, David—a man after God’s own heart. It is through David lineage that Christ will one day be born (Mt 1:1).

## PRAISE HIM FOR SPIRITUAL STABILITY

1 Samuel 2:2 | There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.

Despite the persecution from Peninnah and the devastation of barrenness, Hannah is spiritually stable. Her heart trusts in the goodness of God, and so she rejoices in God’s holiness. That means God is set apart from his creation. He is exalted. He is good and he is great. There’s no one like him. He deserves all of the glory.

God alone deserves the praise. If Christian’s would pray more, they would worry less. He’s a prayer answering God. God is holy and completely separated and “other” apart from his creation. Like a rock, he can be depended on. God alone deserves our highest praise!

## PRAISE HIM FOR HIS SOVEREIGNTY

God is good, and he is in control of all circumstances. He brings life to the womb. Indeed, he has control over life and death. Hannah’s breath is taken away, and she is humbled that the almighty God would answer her. The answer hadn’t come yet, but she was assured in her soul, that God would indeed

<sup>3</sup> Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1999), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Alter, *The David Story*, 10; cf Joyce Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 57; P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes & Commentary, The Anchor Bible*, Vol. 8 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 72.

answer “exceedingly, abundantly above” all that she could ever ask or imagine (Eph 3:20). In deep humility she praises God’s sovereignty.

**1 Samuel 2:3-7** | Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.  
<sup>4</sup>The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength.  
<sup>5</sup>Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. <sup>6</sup>The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. <sup>7</sup>The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.

Hannah rejoices that God is in absolute control, and that he is good to his children. They may be weak. They may be poor. They may be vulnerable. But God’s love does not depend on our might, but on his. God is not constrained by the things humans are normally constrained by. God doesn’t need food, riches or armies to be successful. He controls all things. And he answers the prayers of the humble, who against all odds trust in the Lord. Let’s praise him, for he alone is in sovereign control of the universe. Glory to his powerful name!

### **PRAISE HIM FOR HIS JUSTICE**

Now from the world’s perspective, us weak Christians look pretty destitute at times. But God can reverse the fortunes of the godly and the wicked quite easily. Hannah praises God that God is going to reverse her barrenness so suddenly.

**1 Samuel 2:8-10a** | He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world.  
<sup>9</sup>“He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. <sup>10</sup>The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven.

One day the roles will be reversed. The wicked will be stripped of their riches, their security, and their popularity. Jesus will return in glory and power and will break them to pieces. Those who had persecuted and oppressed God’s faithful remnant will be looking for shelter from the wrath of the Lamb. They will ask the mountains to fall on them. But the Lord “will thunder in heaven.” Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. Hannah trusts in the God who defends and vindicates the weak and barren.

### **PRAISE HIM FOR HIS SON JESUS CHRIST**

Hannah’s song of praise starts on a note of praise for her personal answer to prayer that is coming. But she ends on an a much more cosmic and earth transforming note: that of Jesus the Messiah coming. This is obviously pointing to David, but it is also point to the “Seed of the woman” who will rescue humanity and be king over the whole world.

**1 Samuel 2:10b** | The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”



Here is the first mention of the title “Anointed” or Messiah, which means “king”. It is astonishing that Hannah should speak now of God’s “king.” At the time, of course, there was no king in Israel.<sup>5</sup> Hannah speaks prophetically about a coming king. By calling the king “his anointed,” Hannah is the first to use the term *messiah* with reference to a ruler. Both the Hebrew word *messiah* and the Greek word *Christ* mean “anointed.” Hannah’s prophecy is most appropriate since her son Samuel was the one who anointed both Saul and David and figured prominently in the establishment of the monarchy.<sup>6</sup>

Here is the anointed King of kings, Jesus. The Father in heaven exalts him. Hannah’s prayer of praise is really hopeful for us. She was bringing a son into the world during a time of incredible darkness and upheaval in Israel. There was great debauchery among the people of God. There was no leadership. But God would send a king to Israel named David whom Samuel would anoint many years from now in his old age. David is just a faint picture of the true king.

There is coming a day when Jesus will come to “judge the ends of the earth.” Jesus will destroy all who do not bow the knee to him with his “horn” of victory.

Hannah’s story does not end with her giving her son back to God. No, God takes whatever we give to him, and magnifies it for his kingdom purposes. Whatever you give to God you will get back magnified. For Hannah, her son gets to anoint the great king of Israel and through him comes the true Anointed one, Jesus the Christ.

### Conclusion

Saints, it is vital that we remember that God answers prayer. He does not delight in seeing you stressed out or complete overwhelmed. But it happens to be in those times that we pray best.

It’s at those times that we go back to God for a refuel of his presence. We should always be running on full and never on empty.

The fuel that provides our spiritual power is *prayer*. Prayer is practicing the presence of God. You can’t get very far in the walk of faith without a prayer life, yet many Christians are doing it because they think they’re getting away with it. They’re like me in my car, ignoring their need to pray until their tanks go empty, and they wind up on the side of the road looking for help.

Dear saint, let’s run on full, practicing God’s presence. Inviting him into every situation. Resting in his goodness, his grace, and his love for you. Prayer does indeed change things, but the most important thing it changes is you!

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<sup>5</sup> Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*, 48.

<sup>6</sup> Wolf, *1-2 Samuel*, 194.