

Hannah's Prayer and Eli's Benediction: The Irony at Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:9-20)

1. Elements of Godly Prayer (Hannah's Prayer):

A. Hannah turned to God in her distress (v.11-12)

- At the conclusion of the dinner and feast, Hannah went alone to the tent of meeting. According to the Mosaic Law (Numbers 30:6-15), Hannah would not have been able to make the vow without Elkanah's blessing.
- Elkanah's encouragement was not sufficient to comfort her soul. Hannah knew that the only place she could turn to find consolation was in the presence of God.
- Often times, believers will turn to other outlets of comfort, only to find them fleeting and temporary. True joy is found in the presence of the Lord (Psalm 16:11). Cast your cares on Him because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

B. Hannah knew who God was (v.11)

- Hannah is the first person in Scripture who attributes "The LORD of hosts" to God. This title is used over 230 different times in the OT. It refers to God's omnipotence and power. Hannah appeals to the character of God before she makes any request.
- Hannah would have been familiar with the miracles that God performed in Egypt, the wilderness and Joshua's campaign in the Promised Land. That knowledge was the bedrock of her request.
- Hannah, in her distress, did not resign to fatalism. She did not have a cold and apathetic prayer life because the LORD had not answered her prayer favorably.
- We must be content in the season that the LORD has for us without compromising the fervency of prayer. We must not vacate our petitions and prayers before the LORD because they are not answered.
- Genuine prayer is one of the most difficult Christian disciplines because of our tendency to become discouraged. In our discouragement, we may adopt an indifferent, passive prayer life.
- Resting in God's sovereignty is never an excuse for the human responsibility to pray. Any Christian who neglects the command to pray is not only being disobedient but doubts the sovereignty of God. God's sovereignty includes the discipline of prayer.

C. Hannah knew who she was (v.11,15)

- She refers to herself as a "servant."
- There is an Old Testament theme packed in her title and her request. There is an allusion to God knowing the affliction of His people (Exodus 3:7, 4:31). Hannah begged God to do for her what He did for His people when He saw their heavy afflictions in Egypt.

- As a servant, she comes in humility, asking God to look on her estate.

D. Hannah was concerned with the will and the glory of God (v.11)

- Hannah asked for a son who she would then give back to the LORD.
- Hannah's desire for a son was not for her own well-being, but for the glory of God. She is not bartering with God with selfish motives.
- Does God's glory and the advancement of His kingdom play any part in your prayer life?
- If God grants her request, "no razor shall touch his head."
 - This is an allusion to the Nazarite vow (Numbers 6:1-21) which was marked by three characteristics:
 - abstaining from the fruit of the vine
 - no razor shall touch his head
 - complete avoidance of dead bodies
- Why does she make this vow?
 - Hannah's birth and childhood most likely occurred during the reign of Samson. She would have related to Manoah's childless wife and would have known of no other vow or status that held a greater sacredness of consecration than the Nazarite vow.

2. **Eli's Ironic Benediction** (v.17)

- Eli's conclusion that Hannah was drunk (v.14) is both an accusation and a judgment. The assumption Eli passed on Hannah sheds light into the kinds of activities at these feasts.
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Notice the irony:

- Eli is sitting at the doorpost to the tent of meeting. While he is physically close to the presence of God, his heart is far from the LORD.
- Hannah, the barren woman who is culturally shamed, is closer to the heart of God than Eli, who holds the most prominent position in Israel.
- Eli gives a benediction for Hannah and requests that the LORD grants her desire; Eli unknowingly prays for his own replacement.
- Hannah is a godly, socially insignificant, broken and contrite woman in prayer before the Lord. Eli is the supposed "priest of God" yet unable to discern a genuine, heart-felt prayer.
- Eli as the official priest is supposed to be a man of prayer. On the contrary, he does not even recognize genuine faith, even when it appears right in front of him.

The LORD is no longer going to look to the house of Eli, who represents Israel; a nation that is estranged from God. Instead, the LORD is going to raise up a prophet Samuel, who is going to change the spiritual apathetic climate of Israel.