

Hannah's Prayer

(I Sam. 2:1-10)

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction ó

A. Title & Text Introduction:

1. Hannah's Prayer ó sometimes called Hannah's Song or Hannah's Psalm ó all appropriate titles in that it is a prayer of thanksgiving and rejoicing in the Lord's salvation

B. Background:

1. In chapter 1, we read about Hannah's husband, Elkanah (El-kay-ø-nah) who actually had 2 wives, Hannah & Peninnah (Pey-nin-ø-nah). Peninnah had children but as vs. 5 & 6 tell us, the Lord had shut up Hannah's womb. And Peninnah provoked Hannah over this issue, year after year, causing her to mourn greatly. So, Peninnah was quite the adversary or enemy to Hannah.
2. Well, as they came to worship at Shiloh, Hannah prayed for God to give her a child. She promised to dedicate the child to the Lord. And we learn from vs. 19-20 that it was in God's purpose to give her a child and she named the child Samuel, the name meaning "asked of God."
3. And so as we begin chapter 2, Hannah lifts her voice in rejoicing in God having delivered her from her heavy heart and giving her the child she had so desired.

II. Text: (Read I Sam. 2:1-10)

A. General Comments about Hannah's Prayer:

1. We see in this prayer a 2 fold application of Hannah's thankfulness unto God in:
 - (a) First, her temporal salvation so to speak ó that is in His providing her the child that she had longed and prayed for, Samuel, who God would raise up to be a deliverer and prophet to the nation Israel. And secondly
 - (b) We see an eternal / spiritual application concerning God and how He delivers spiritual Israel (His chosen people) unto eternal salvation in Christ ó that likewise is solely of His doing ó totally of the Lord.
2. It's not only that we extract eternal significance from the analogy made to her temporal salvation (i.e.- of having been delivered from her distress of not having been able to bear a child before this), but in the context of the prayer, Hannah clearly and accurately describes God as the provider of all things including all eternal blessings in Christ ó referred to at the end of her prayer as "his anointed."

3. We also can learn much from the focus of Hannah's prayer. Notice that her **"...heart rejoiceth in the Lord,..."** not in the son He had given her but in the goodness and kindness of the Lord, in His great condescension to her, and in the notice He took of her. And so it should be with us. The focus of our prayer should be on God, the giver, and not the gift.
4. God's blessings (temporal and eternal) should trigger us to look beyond simply our delight in the favorable circumstances. Our hearts should be drawn to praise Him as the giver from whom all blessings flow. As reflected in Hannah's prayer, in praise we recognize that He alone makes our temporal and eternal circumstances to differ.
5. So in contemplation of God as He is, our hearts are drawn toward Him in gratitude and we worship Him. And you can't help but get this sense of worship and adoration in reading this song of praise.

III. 3 Major Distinguishing Characteristics pertaining to God's Salvation (in contrast to our natural notions of salvation or the way that seems right to us by nature):

- A. The one sovereign God is the source of God's salvation
- B. God's salvation is by pure grace (not of man's hands or works to any degree).
- C. Christ, the anointed one (the Messiah), receives all the preeminence in God's salvation

IV. Verse by Verse Exposition:

A. Verse 1:

1. We see this from the onset in verse 1 as she prays that her heart is rejoicing **"in the Lord."**
2. **"Mine horn is exalted in the Lord."** The horn is often used as a picture of strength in the Bible, signifying power, might, & dominion. Many think this meaning is derived from the strength attributed to horned creatures such as an ox or a steer. Hannah is speaking of her strength and power being exalted in the LORD, raised up in rank or dignity by virtue of God's deliverance.
3. And she says that **"her mouth is enlarged over mine enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation."** This reminds us of Jonah's salvation or his deliverance from the belly of the whale. When he recognized his absolute and total dependence upon God alone, he cried out, **"Salvation is of the Lord."** (Jonah 2:9)
4. I believe in this verse Hannah is expressing her strong sense of vindication over her rival, Peninnah (Elkanah's other wife) who had treated Hannah so cruelly. And yet being vindicated, she acknowledges that it was the Lord who lifted her up or exalted her.
5. Likewise, God's people will be vindicated as well when it comes to eternal salvation and based upon the context of the rest of Hannah's prayer, I'm inclined to believe that both (her temporal deliverance as well as eternal salvation) may have been intended in these comments. If not, certainly we can see the analogy to eternal salvation because it likewise is God's deliverance, with no contribution from the flesh or it is **"thy"** salvation as Hannah prays.

B. Verse 2: And then in verse 2 we see language reminiscent of Isa. 45. Consider God's words through the prophet as recorded at the end of verse 21 when He says, **"...and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. ²²Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."** As Hannah prays that **"...neither is there any rock like our God,"** we should be reminded that it is because of His distinction as both a just God and a Savior that we see how sure and certain (solid like a rock) our salvation is ó for in beholding God as Hannah sees Him here in Christ (and as He is distinguished in the Gospel) is to see not only how God could save sinners based upon Christ's satisfaction to justice, but how it must be so ó how he must of necessity have suffered, died and rose again. Now there's assurance in that!

C. Verse 3:

1. To see God aright is to **"...talk no more..."** of our self righteousness and religious pride ó having been taught of God, we repent of having manifested such arrogance ourselves in having assumed that salvation was conditioned (at least in some degree) on the sinner, rather than on Christ alone.
2. Why do we **"...talk no more..."**? Because when God reveals Himself to us, we see the standard by which He judges salvation or as Hannah put it, **"...by him actions are weighed,"** Him who is **"...a God of knowledge."** He knows all things and he weighs all things in accordance with His strict standard of justice.
3. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ gave us the command to which we must comply if we presume to be judged upon anything proceeding from us, when He declared, **"Be ye therefore perfect..."** (Mt. 5:48)
4. In Acts 17 Paul expressed this in his sermon on Mars Hill when He issued God's call to all men everywhere to repent because God was going to judge the world **"...in righteousness..."** ó referring there to the impeccable righteousness of Christ.
5. Now, knowing God in this way as inflexibly holy and just, seeing His standard of perfect righteousness, will shut up our proud and arrogant mouths.
6. It will cause all of God's sheep (spiritual Israel) to see in each generation the impossibility of salvation being conditioned on themselves, the sinner. And as such, it will cause them to repent from such arrogant, proud thoughts. No ó ðí **by him actions are weighed."** So you had better possess a righteousness that equals that of the impeccable God-man.

D. Verse 4:

1. When it comes to finding deliverance before this holy God, the **"...bows..."** (the weapons or the might) of **"...the mighty men are broken..."** ó useless. Every false hope that lies in the strength of man shall be ultimately shattered.
2. And yet ðí **they that stumbled...** (those God is pleased to reveal Himself to in this life as possessing no might within themselves) are **"...girded with strength"** so as to prevail in the battle.

D. Vs 4 (Con't.)

3. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians in chapter 6: ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”***
4. I believe that the tone of Hannah’s entire song of praise here is reflected in the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 28:7 where we read, ***“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.”*** Who is helped? The one who stumbles, who finds no might within themselves. ***“The Lord is my strength...”*** ó all the strength that I possess.

E. Verse 5:

1. The ones who hungered not, who imagined themselves full ó have hired themselves out for bread ó they struggle as mercenaries attempting to earn their keep.
2. And ***“...they that were hungry ceased.”*** I love that word “ceased” as it is often used in the scripture for it alludes to the rest we enter into in Christ. As He ceased, satisfied with what He had accomplished on the cross, He ***“sat down”*** ó He ***“ceased”***.
3. And as Hebrews teaches us, we enter into that rest, we cease from our labors ó for we find ourselves totally complete / filled in Christ. Having discovered what we need, we hunger and thirst after His righteousness, and find ourselves filled therein.
4. ***“...seven..”*** Hannah ultimately appears to have had 5 other children after Samuel which would total 6. So here I am inclined to believe she is speaking of 7 symbolically as the number of perfection or completion and so perhaps alluding more toward the spiritual or eternal analogy of things. And it is so for the ***“barren”*** who are brought to understand that they cannot produce anything of themselves ó they are helpless to contribute anything to their own salvation. But those who imagine that they are productive, that is that they can produce something that at least plays a part in their blessedness before God, they ultimately ***“wax feeble”*** ó will be proved to be helpless & fruitless after all.

F. Verse 6:

1. I believe this also may be considered in light of both our physical and spiritual life. You had nothing to do with your time or circumstances of your own physical birth and the scriptures teach us ***“...it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment.”***
2. And so it is in a spiritual sense. The Lord slays us by the law and makes us alive by His Spirit, through the Gospel. And the Spirit’s revelation of God in Christ (based upon His righteousness) is testimony or a seal to us that He shall bring them up from the grave. Christ said, ***“I will raise them up at the last day.”***

G. Verse 7:

God causes it to rain on the just and the unjust, temporally speaking. But spiritually speaking, we have to be ***made*** ***“...poor in spirit...”*** (Mt. 5:3) ó that is, made sensible of our abject poverty and so discover our riches in Christ Jesus.

H. Verse 8:

1. Here, those who ðí ***inherit the throne of glory...*** are described as ***“...beggar<s> from the dunghill...”*** God makes His people mercy beggars and as such, they discover their places among princes (adopted by the King of Kings).
2. ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*** (Mt. 5:3)
3. And He makes them ðí ***inherit...*** the throne of Glory. It should be clear now that Hannah is specifically referring to eternal salvation!
4. And there should be no doubt that God, as the sovereign God of this universe, is able ***“...for the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s and He hath set the world upon them.”*** Some think this may refer to the kings and rulers of the earth and others to the fact that He holds this seemingly fragile planet in His hands so as to sustain our very life. We worship a big God!

I. Verse 9 ó

1. He keeps us! Our feet propel us down a pathway. And He preserves us in His way. We may be tempted to add or take away from the finished work of Christ ó His righteousness. But don’t fear for God’s people. The righteousness He has imputed to all for whom Christ lived and died is the same righteousness revealed to them in the Gospel by His Spirit. And this revelation of God in Christ, based solely upon the satisfaction rendered at the cross, is the certain, unfailing grace purchased for them at the cross. And this righteousness by which all of God’s elect stand holy, unreprouvable, unblameable, is an everlasting righteousness! ***“He will keep the feet...”*** of those He set aside in Christ ó ***“...His saints.”***
2. ***“...and the wicked shall be silent...”*** ó ultimately every mouth shall be stopped as every knee bows. God shall be vindicated.
3. Why? ó because of the truth so prevalent here throughout Hannah’s song (its theme so to speak). It is this ó ***“...by strength <meaning man’s strength ó salvation conditioned on the sinner in any way or to any degree>, shall no man prevail.”***

J. Verse 10:

1. There will be a judgment and the ***“...adversaries...”*** (such as we all are by nature until God is pleased to bring us to faith and repentance from the way that seems right to us), ***“...shall be broken.”***
2. And who gains victory over Satan, His adversary, and sin ó over the adversary to whom we all are natural allied with by nature? It shall be His ***“...anointed”*** (Christ, the Messiah). The word translated ðanointedö is maw-sheeø-akh which means öMessiah.ö
3. Note that just as Hannah began her prayer saying that her horn was exalted in the Lord, here she ends it speaking prophetically of how God shall ðí ***exalt the horn of His anointed,***ö in direct reference to the earned exaltation by the work of the promised Messiah.

J. Vs 10 (Con't.)

4. So we see here that Hannah was speaking of her strength and power as being “...***exalted in the LORD,***” ó raised up in rank or dignity by virtue of the eternal deliverance God would bring through His “...***anointed.***” And she closes by making note of the fact that all of her exaltation or dignity is in Him to whom all dignity and preeminence shall belong ó i.e., to Christ alone for God shall give all strength, power and dominion unto Him, the Lord Jesus Christ!

V. Summary ó

I trust that you too have observed in Hannah's prayer this morning, how:

- (1) The one sovereign God is the source of God's salvation
- (2) God's salvation is by pure grace (not of man's hands or works to any degree).
- (3) Christ, the anointed one (the Messiah), receives all the preeminence in God's salvation

That last point (as driven home by the closing words in Hannah's prayer) is consistent with and reinforced in Paul's letter to the Colossians. There in chapter 1, he describes the Lord Jesus Christ ó this anointed one in whom Hannah rejoiced. So in closing, let me share that with you, beginning in verse 18 where we read,

***“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. ¹⁹For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; ²⁰And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. ²¹And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, (you whom Hannah described as being lifted up out of the dust) yet now hath he reconciled <how?> ²²In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:*”**

Wow ó all of His merit ó His righteousness being accounted unto me, a sinner! Like Hannah, that should cause us to see how our “...***horn is exalted in the Lord***” and so rejoice in “***thy***” / God's salvation through His anointed one ó the Lord Jesus Christ, based solely upon His finished work at the cross whereby He receives all the preeminence.

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself ó the Bible.