

Hannah's Prayer

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[0 : 00] Let's turn together now to 1st Samuel in chapter 1. 1st Samuel chapter 1, we can read verses 9 and 10.

So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord, and she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore, and she vowed a vow, and so on.

In 1st Samuel in chapter 1, you find Hannah in prayer, in bitterness of soul. In 1st Samuel chapter 2, you find Hannah in prayer, full of rejoicing.

And that sometimes is very much the way people are. There are times when we go on our knees praying, and as if we are weeping sore. Other times, our hearts are just brimful with joy.

Prayer is the key to the Christian life. It has to be there at the beginning of the Christian life. For without prayer, no one can become a Christian.

[1 : 25] No normal person can become a Christian without prayer. And prayer is also the key to the rest of your Christian growth, because you cannot grow as a Christian without the exercise of prayer.

So if you're a seeker today, someone who hasn't yet found Christ as a Savior, I must ask you if you are praying to the Lord.

Whether you're a young child, or a young person, or somebody that's full of days, are you a praying person? You see, if you're not a Christian, I can understand that if you're not praying.

But if you are seeking the Lord, the promise is that they that seek him shall find him. And if you are a Christian, and you're not feeling that you're growing at all in knowledge, or in the character of a Christian, or in the understanding of Scripture, if you feel that there's no purpose to your Christian life, if you feel that you're going nowhere, can I ask you, are you a praying person?

Do your children know you as a praying person? Are you somebody that tries to make time to be at a prayer meeting? Are you somebody that really strives to pray, even when things are very difficult?

[3 : 06] Prayer is essential. I couldn't underline it more. It is absolutely essential. You cannot live without it.

You cannot begin without it. You need to pray. You need to pray to the God of heaven. Because prayer is an expression of your faith.

And when you begin to pray to ask the Lord to be your Savior, that becomes the expression of your faith. When you put it into words, you're grasping onto the promises of the gospel and prayer.

So if the Lord says to you that you will no wise cast out anybody who comes to him, then you say, yes, I believe that. Lord, I come to you.

You have not cast me out. You have brought me in. And you receive Christ in that way. Or if Christ says to you that he is the living water, that he who drinks of this living water, he shall never thirst again, then you go to Christ and say, Lord, I believe that if I receive you, I will be eternally satisfied.

[4 : 28] My soul will be filled with good things. I receive it. Thank you. Prayer is the beginning of the Christian life. You know, this prayer can be born out of disappointment.

Some of you will have been praying for a very long time, either to become a Christian or to grow as a Christian or for the conversion of some other member of your family.

Or perhaps you're praying for something else that's very personal to you. For Hannah, she was praying for a child. She couldn't have children.

We're told in verse 5, the Lord had shut up her womb. That was a biblical way of saying that the Lord was preventing her from having any children.

Very disappointing time for Hannah because the days in which she was living were very difficult days for any believer in the Lord.

[5 : 34] The judges were ruling in those days. But they wanted a visible king like all the other nations. They didn't want to be different from the other nations.

They wanted to be like the people of the world and to live the world's ways. And the church in that day was corrupt. Eli, he was the chief priest. He had two sons, Hothme and Phinehas, and they were corrupt.

They were even sleeping with the women who gathered to worship at the temple. That's how corrupt they were. The church was very corrupt.

And Eli himself, when he saw Hannah praying at the temple and he saw her lips moving, his first thoughts were, Hannah is drunk.

Because it seems to have been a common thing for people to have gathered to the worship and drunk that much wine that they were just drunken. Imagine if you came to church this morning and you found people drunk in the pews.

[6 : 41] If you found people, as it were, engaging in all sorts of immoral relations. Well, that's what the church in that day was like. So Hannah, I'm sure, felt very down about that.

But she was also feeling very disappointed because her rival wife, Peninnah, and her husband, her canna, had married, Peninnah had lots of children, many children, but she had none.

And Peninnah was rubbing it in, trying to make things really difficult for Hannah, as if she was provoking her and saying, Hannah, it's the Lord that shut up your womb.

It's the Lord that's preventing you from having children. And every year, especially when they went up to the worship of the temple in Jerusalem, it happened.

That's the time when Peninnah would rub it in even more. That's when she would take the salt and rub it into the bloody wound so that Hannah would really feel worse.

[7 : 48] Isn't it funny how if somebody wants to upset you, they can choose the very moment to do it. Just when you feel at your most sensitive, Hannah coming up perhaps once in a year to worship the Lord at Shiloh.

And it's at that very time that Peninnah chooses to rub it in. Some of us might feel very sensitive after preaching on our Lord's Day.

And that will often be the time when something will happen just to bring us down, to depress us that little bit more, just to disappoint us.

You see, the enemy can often choose the very time to bring disappointment into your life. Well, she was, as we read here, in bitterness of soul in verse 10.

Now, what would you do if you were in bitterness of soul? There are some people that say, well, I'm not going to church today because I'm just too upset.

[8 : 54] I'm just too disappointed. Things are not going the way I had planned. Things are very difficult, very dark. So what's the point in going to church?

And especially, what's the point in prayer? When things seem to be so disappointing, isn't it easy to take it out upon the Lord and say, I'm not going to pray to the Lord.

I didn't get the husband that I wanted. I didn't get the child that I wanted. I didn't get the conversion that I wanted. I didn't get the job that I wanted. I didn't get the plan worked out the way I wanted it. I had my life set before me and it's gone all wrong. So I'm going to take it out upon the Lord. I'm in bitterness of soul and I'm not going to pray.

I am so disappointed with what my God has planned for me. I'm not going to pray. Hannah, Hannah, she found that her prayer was born out of disappointment.

[10 : 06] It was in the very bitterness of soul that she prayed unto the Lord and she wept sore. Do you know what it's like to pray weeping?

To pray with stinging eyes? Do you know what it's like to feel so upset that the tears are running into your mouth as you're praying?

Many of you do. I'm sure of that. Now, sometimes it's those prayers that are most precious of all because they've been born out of the well of disappointment when you found that everything was so empty and you cried out to the Lord and you cried out to the faithful God just like Hannah did here.

as she prayed out, O Lord. Do you know that that word Lord in Hebrew comes from the phrase I am that I am.

I am the God who is faithful. I am always the same. Hannah, I never change. I am that I am.

[11 : 31] You can bring your petitions to me whatever state you are in. Because I don't change. You see, sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that God's moods change with our moods so that if we feel disappointed that the Lord is also disappointed.

Or if we feel happy that the Lord is also riding on the clouds of happiness. happiness. But the Lord is unchangeable.

He is the Lord who is I am that I am. He is the one who is always full of power. Always certain of what to do.

Always in full control of your life and your children's lives and your church's life. So remember that he is the faithful God.

Oh Lord, she said. And also remember he is the Lord of hosts. He is the mighty God. The word of hosts Sebaoth. You find that maybe is in the New King James Version.

[12 : 47] I think they use that phrase. Sebaoth. That can mean hosts. It can mean the army of Israel. It can mean the army of angels.

Or it can mean the hosts of the army of the stars in heaven. Whichever way you speak of the Lord of hosts where is the Lord who is in control of the whole universe or the Lord who is in control of the angelic army or whether it is the Lord who is in control of all his people.

You can pray to him because he has such might. With God nothing is impossible. Is that the God you are praying to?

With God nothing is impossible. She felt everyone was against her perhaps and yet she came and prayed O Lord of hosts.

Prayer can be born out of disappointment. Prayer can be clarified by delay. Prayer can be clarified by delay.

[14 : 03] You see when Hannah prayed she prayed very specific not just for any baby not just for any child not just for any sex she prayed for a boy child a male child she was so specific that she could afford to be specific because over the years she might have longed just for any child and she might have prayed to the Lord back home there in Ephra she could have prayed there Lord just give me any baby Peninnas having all these children just give me a child that will run around my feet just give me a child that will sit upon my knee just give me a child so that I can smell that child's hair so that I can hug that child hold that child feel that child love that child any child Lord but you see the Lord didn't answer their prayer and child after child was born to

Peninnah Hannah kept on praying but no child come no child come at all and she kept on praying and praying but the prayer changed and by the time she was weeping sore in Shiloh her prayer was for a boy child a male child and she wasn't just asking as a woman she was asking for this as a handmaid of the Lord as a servant of God she says oh Lord of hosts if you will look indeed on the affliction of your handmaid and remember me and not forget your handmaid but will give unto your handmaid a man child you see she's there as a handmaid of the Lord the one who is almost ready to do everything the Lord wants she's praying there as a servant of the Lord of hosts well you see if you're praying as a servant you can afford to ask for specific things because you know that you're not just wanting them for your glory but for his the Lord's glory she asked as a servant and she asked with honesty she was very honest in what she asked for because she wanted a child she was burdened for that and sometimes we must be very honest in our prayers we mustn't just pray what somebody else is praying if we feel that we have to go further then let's go further if it's a burden that the

Lord has laid upon our hearts then let's pray for it perhaps you don't hear anybody praying in our prayer meeting for anybody specific to be converted does that mean that you shouldn't do it of course it doesn't if the Lord is burdening you for people then you pray for them and pray for them by name if the Lord is burdening you for a street in will then pray for that street by name don't please narrow your prayers down until they're all so much the same be honest in your prayer and the Lord will clarify he will purify your prayer she asked with honesty she also asked with faith because it took great faith to pray for a man child it wasn't just a baby but for a male child so when the child was born and there was the excitement is it a boy or a girl she was expecting a boy in every sense of the word she didn't need any fancy piece of technology to tell her what sex the child was because she knew she asked for a male child and she expected this she had the faith to believe that the Lord would grant what she asked and remember what we said so many weeks ago that our prayers must be like that because what we receive is related to what we expect what if we don't expect in prayer will we receive but Hannah she had the faith to ask what about you people who are not yet

converted what do you expect when you go and ask the Lord to bring you to be a Christian do you expect him to answer the prayer or are you just praying it because it's first thing in the morning or the last thought at night is there that expectancy are you laying hold of the gospel are you laying hold of Christ and say yes he will answer my prayer I believe he will answer my prayer I have faith this is the day that the Lord has made it's my day to be saved my day for my prayer to be answered keep on praying my friend don't stop praying you will find your prayers will change as you ask for things because the Lord can cleanse can wash your prayers so they are more pure so you're wanting something for the right reasons for example those of you who aren't Christians why do you want to be a Christian you might think another strange thing for a minister to ask why do you want to be a Christian isn't it just enough for you to ask Lord make me a Christian well no because you might be wanting to be a Christian for all the wrong reasons you might want to be a Christian so you have something nice written on your head stone when you die or so that you have a nice obituary in a paper or so that you can be an elder and have a really reputable status in the church or you might be wanting it so people point the finger at you and say isn't he good listen is the [20 : 44] Lord purifying that request of you to become a Christian to the point when you want to become a Christian so that your sins will be forgiven you're so guilty you're so laden with guilt and there's only one way for the guilt to be taken away and that's if you're joined to Christ in a marriage of faith is that what's up and most in your mind do you want to become a Christian so you can serve the Lord so you can walk with the Lord and be close to the Lord these are good motives well you see your prayer can be clarified by delay prayer can be born out of disappointment clarified by delay prayer can bring you to that point where you promise that's what happened to Hannah she vowed a vow you see when she came to the point when she had no children after years of prayer she said

Lord if you grant me this male child I'll give him back to you you give him to me and I'll give him to you I'll set him apart for you I'll train him while he's young to be your servant and then I'll give him to you as soon as he's of age so he can live in the temple in the place at Shiloh with Eli and that's what she did now that's quite a vow that's quite a promise isn't that a real mark of submission that she could say Lord you give a child to me and I'll give him back to you I might never be able to hug him except once a year I might not be able to gaze into his blue eyes except once a year but Lord you can have him and he can be your servant and if you give him to me I'll give him to you I vow that vow Lord it's not a bribe Lord because I don't want the child except to give him to you I want him to be a leader in your cause I want him to turn the nation back to you you see prayer brought her to the point of promise and consecration commitment and you know my friend that's what the Lord can do to you as well he can through prayer bring you to that point where you commit everything to the Lord when you're willing to give all your life to God who is unconverted here today which children are still without Jesus are you willing to give him all your life are you willing to give him your hands your feet your mind your eyes are you willing to give him all your time all your strength are you willing to give him every day of 1996 and every day of the rest of your life are you going to give everything to him have you been brought to that point and you said to the Lord Lord I want to become a Christian so much so that I can give my whole life to you my whole life will you vow to give yourself to the Lord no turning back you know the chorus no turning back no turning back there's some wonderful joy when that happens real joy I've never known the depth of joy that I know when I've submitted to God's will real joy now for Hannah God's will was that she should have the child and she rejoiced for some people God's will may be that they do not have the child and yet they learn to rejoice in that because they learn that well if this is God's will for them God must have their blessings in store for them if God doesn't want them to have this child then the Lord is wanting something else for them something even greater something even more appropriate if the Lord is saying no to one thing and yet he brings us to commit ourselves wholly to the Lord then isn't it even better you know there are some people and the Lord said no to their prayers and he said yes to their lives no he says you can't have what you're asking for but I will give you life you can have me but you can't have the child you can have me but you can't have the work you can have my presence in your life forever and ever you can have living water from Christ and you'll never thirst again no he says you can't have this but I'll give you myself you know are you willing to submit to that to know the joy of having [26 : 56] God himself thing is this you might say well what's that compared to having the child well you know however long we live a separation will come between ourselves and our children between

ourselves and the husband we want between ourselves and the money we desired but if you become a Christian the marriage between yourself and Christ will never be broken you will have him forever and ever let us pray Lord our sovereign ever blessing and blessed God we ask that you would bless people here this morning give them yourself give them yourself in Christ

Jesus in all the glory of the gospel give them yourself in salvation give them yourself in eternal love keep them Lord bind them close to you don't ever let them be lost for we ask it in Christ name Amen