

Hannah's Song of Praise

1 Samuel 2

1 Samuel 2 - *"And Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation. ² "No one is holy like the LORD, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God. ³ "Talk no more so very proudly; let no arrogance come from your mouth, for the LORD is the God of knowledge; and by Him actions are weighed. ⁴ "The bows of the mighty men are broken, and those who stumbled are girded with strength. ⁵ Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, and the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, and she who has many children has become feeble.*

⁶ "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. ⁷ The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. ⁸ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory. "For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and He has set the world upon them. ⁹ He will guard the feet of His saints, but the wicked shall be silent in darkness. For by strength no man shall prevail. ¹⁰ The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; from heaven He will thunder against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed."

¹¹ Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah. But the child ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest. ¹² Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD. ¹³ And the priests' custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. ¹⁴ Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. ¹⁵ Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw."

¹⁶ And if the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force." ¹⁷ Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

¹⁸ But Samuel ministered before the LORD, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹ Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰ And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "The LORD give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the LORD." Then they would go to their own home. ²¹ And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD. ²² Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ²³ So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. ²⁴ No, my sons! It is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD's people transgress. ²⁵ If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them.

²⁶ And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men. ²⁷ Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? ²⁸ Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? ²⁹ Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?' ³⁰ Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: 'I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.' But now the LORD says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. ³¹ Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. ³² And you will see an enemy in My dwelling place, despite all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever. ³³ But any of your men whom I do not cut off from My altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age. ³⁴ Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them. ³⁵ Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before Me anointed forever. ³⁶ And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, "Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread.'"

Background Notes

In this chapter we obviously have a contrast between a faithful mother, Hannah, and an unfaithful father, Eli. We also have a contrast between a godly son, Samuel, and Eli's ungodly sons, Hophni and Phinehas. In the first part of this chapter we have Hannah's song of praise in response to God's answer to her prayers for a son. The virgin Mary's song of praise, after the angel Gabriel told her that she would be the mother of the Messiah, seems to have been influenced by Hannah's song of praise. Mary's song is found in Luke 1, and it is known as the "Magnificat." Mary may have been reflecting on Hannah's song of praise as she uttered her own song of praise, under the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the second part of chapter 2 we have the sad record of Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. What a great contrast to Hannah and her son Samuel! Verse 12 says that the sons of Eli were corrupt men and that they didn't know the Lord. Hophni and Phinehas were guilty of breaking God's moral laws and God's ceremonial laws of the Mosaic Covenant.

Hophni and Phinehas broke the ceremonial laws of the Mosaic Covenant in two ways. First, they took more of the meat of the sacrifices than they were supposed to, according to Leviticus 7. Second, they took the meat of the sacrifices before the fat had been burned, in accordance with Leviticus 3.

They broke God's moral laws in two ways as well. First, they despised or looked down on the offering of the Lord (v17). Are we guilty of looking down on or despising the things of the Lord? If we just show up for a church service on Sunday

morning, and if worshiping and serving the Lord are lower on our priority list than our jobs, our vacations and our material possessions, then we really are despising the things of the Lord. How else can our selfish lifestyles be explained? The second way in which they broke God's moral laws was that they were involved in fornication at the house of the Lord -- not just once, but many times (v22)! As a result of their sins, God said that they would be struck down and killed on the same day. And indeed they were, as we will see in 1 Samuel 4.

Doctrinal Points

1. Hannah is an example of a faithful and dedicated servant.

There were still some godly people in Israel during the sad period of the Judges, and Hannah was one of them. God always has a "godly remnant" of faithful believers, even in the darkest days. Notice that there is no hint of revenge in Hannah's song of praise. Even though Peninnah, Hannah's rival, mocked her when she was barren, Hannah rose above her former bitterness and found her strength and victory in the Lord (v1). Hannah praised the Lord for His holiness (v2), and for His knowledge and omniscience (v3). In verses 4-8 Hannah praised the Lord for His power in all areas of life.

Verse 6 could certainly be used as a scriptural argument against abortion and euthanasia: "*The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.*" How dare we infringe on the Lord's prerogative, and take life? This area belongs to the Lord alone! In verse 9 Hannah praised the Lord for His perfect and sovereign judgments, and she looked on to the future kingdom of our Lord here on this earth in verse 10. I trust that we are all like Hannah, and faithfully serve and praise the Lord. Hannah is an example of a faithful and dedicated servant.

2. Eli is an example of an unfaithful and undisciplined servant.

The good news about Eli, the high priest, is that he encouraged Hannah when she had no children, and he was willing to have little Samuel live and serve at the Tabernacle. But the bad news is that Eli was not a good father, and he was not a good high priest. He didn't discipline his sons, and he didn't discipline himself to fulfill his responsibility by maintaining order and purity in the worship of God at the Tabernacle, so God had to discipline Eli and his sons. When Eli heard about the sins of Hophni and Phinehas, he spoke to them -- but Eli should have done more than just talk to his sons! As high priest, he should have defrocked them! He should have immediately removed them from the priesthood! But Eli was not disciplined enough to discipline his sons. Eli honored his sons more than he honored God, and therefore God had to discipline Eli.

Verse 25 says, "*Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them.*" Does the phrase "*the Lord desired to kill them*" bother you? Ephesians 1:11 says that God "...works all things according to the counsel of His will." God's purpose was to discipline Hophni and Phinehas with death, and he worked through Eli's failures to accomplish that purpose. God used a prophet to pronounce judgment on Eli. All his descendants would die in the prime of life, his sons Hophni and Phinehas would die on the same day, and his family line would be removed from the priesthood.

In contrast to Eli and his unfaithful sons, the Lord promised to raise up a faithful priest who would do what was in God's heart and mind (v35). Zadok was that future faithful priest, who became high priest under King Solomon. True to the prophecy, Zadok was a descendant of Aaron, but he was not in Eli's family line. As a faithful priest, Zadok is a picture of the Lord Jesus, our faithful High Priest and King, who did everything according to God's heart and mind. The removal of Eli and from the priestly line is emphasized in verse 36, with the prediction that Eli's descendants would try to get a job helping the priests just to get a crust of bread to eat! Eli is an example of an unfaithful and undisciplined servant.

Practical Application

Don't dishonor the Lord by failing to discipline your children!

Are you the kind of parent who warns their child, "If you do that one more time, I will have to discipline you?" -- but then never carries out the discipline? If you're that type of parent, you're like unfaithful Eli -- all talk and no action! As far as God is concerned, you're not honoring Him. In verse 29 God asked Eli why he had honored his sons more than he honored God!

Parents are responsible to discipline their children -- appropriately, and under proper emotional control. If we don't discipline wrongdoing in our children's lives, we dishonor the Lord. Don't dishonor the Lord by failing to discipline your children!