

# Sacrifice: Giving it to God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Thank you. Nice to be back here again. The theme is sacrifice, and I want you to know I am making a sacrifice being here today.

! And I'm not trying to tell you that my church is better than your church, but birthdays, it's my birthday in April, and birthdays in our church, you get a bar of chocolate.

So I am missing out on my bar of chocolate today, so I just want you to know that. Now, if you don't know who I am, as Bev said, my name is Richard. I'm the minister of Chatsworth Baptist Church.

Church Secretary Peter King came and preached here a couple of weeks ago. So I hope that was okay. And as Bev said, I'm your moderator, which means I'm walking with you as you look to find a new minister.

I don't feel like I'm doing a good job, because you don't have a new minister yet. But we continue to pray, don't we? That God will send the right person at the right time. Good. So, I'm here with my wife Jenny, by the way.

[ 1 : 02 ] This is Jenny. If you'd like to say hello afterwards, you know who she is. Oh, we've got a new person in church today. Right. We're in 1 Samuel.

Now, if you've got a church Bible, and you're going through your Bible, and you get to the end of the book of Judges, what book do you come to next?

Ruth. Book of Ruth. If you have a Hebrew Bible, and I've got a Jewish Bible back in my office, when you get to the end of the book of Judges, it's Samuel. And so, they have the books in a slightly different order.

The idea being that when you get to the end of the book of Judges, it says everybody does right in their own eyes. As if the whole nation is going off their own way, and doing whatever they want to do.

And then you start at the beginning of the book of Samuel, with a family who are doing right in God's eyes, who are seeking to be faithful. So, let's look at 1 Samuel, chapter 1, beginning at verse 1.

[ 2 : 06 ] And this is what it says. There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zulfite, from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah, son of Jerichoam, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zulf, an Ephraimite.

He had two wives. One was called Hannah, and the other Penanah. Penanah had children, but Hannah had none. Year after year, this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord.

Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Penanah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah, he gave a double portion, because he loved her and the Lord had closed her womb.

Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her until she wept and would not eat.

Her husband Elkanah would say to her, Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons? Once they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up.

[ 3 : 31 ] Now Eli, the priest, was sitting on his chair by the doorposts of the Lord's house. In her deep anguish, Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow saying, Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant, but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.

As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk, and said to her, How long are you going to stay drunk?

Put away your wine. Not so, my Lord, Hannah replied. I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer. I was pouring out my soul to the Lord.

Do not take your servant for a wicked woman. I have been praying here out of my anguish and grief. Eli answered, Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.

She said, May your servant find favour in your eyes. Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. Early the next morning, they arose and worshipped before the Lord, and then went back to their home at Ramah.

[ 4 : 57 ] Elkanah made love to his wife, Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. So in the course of time, Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, Because I asked the Lord for him.

Okay. I know a woman who was kidnapped. She's Nigerian. She lives in Nigeria.

She serves for a charity in Nigeria called Grace and Light. One day in her home, some men turned up with guns, and they took her. They said, It's business.

It's business. We're taking you away to ransom you, because we want to earn money from you. So they took her out of her home at gunpoint, and they marched her off through the bush. She's part of a charity called Grace and Light, and she felt as she was marched off through the bush, even if this might be the end of her life, that she should be grace and light to her kidnappers.

So that as she was marched off at gunpoint, if they would stumble in their walk, their march, she would reach down a hand to offer to pick them up.

[ 6 : 09 ] Even though when she stumbled, they would not do the same for her. But all the time she prayed for them, saying that the Lord should bless them. When they got to their camp, their base of operations, if you like, the main boss came over to her and said, My men are now going to have their way with you.

And she said, Lord, give me wisdom. You know, Lord, help me to know what to say. You know, Jesus said, When you get put before authorities, don't worry. The Spirit will speak on your behalf.

And she prayed for wisdom. And she knew that though they didn't respect women, they respected their mothers. And she said, You're young enough to be my children. And I am your mother. Why would you touch me?

And so they left her alone. When the ransom hadn't been paid, the boss came over with his AK-47 and he leveled it at her. And he said, Now is your end. And she laughed.

And they said, Why are you laughing? Do you not realise this is the end of your life? And she said, But I'm a Christian. I know Jesus. If you end my life now, I go to be with him. And she was able to share the gospel with them.

[ 7 : 20 ] Eventually, on the third day, in fact, she is released. And she went back home. An extraordinary episode. Nine months later, she was kidnapped again.

Turned up with guns and they marched her off into the bush. Only this time, she did not feel grace and light. In fact, she was angry and annoyed. And she shouted out to God, Why have you allowed this to happen?

Why is this happening to me again? If the first time wasn't dreadful enough, you're having to put me through this all again. What on earth have you brought me out here for? She was so angry that in her prayers, she said, Lord, will you rain down fire upon these men?

Will you wipe them out? I don't care if I'm wiped out at the same time, but send down your fire and get rid of all these evil men. No fire came.

She said, Lord, send snakes that they may bite their feet. They may poison them. They may die a horrible death. No snakes came. They got to the base camp.

[ 8 : 23 ] She came and she sat down. She crossed her arms across her chest. And she bowed her head. She was in a mood. Now, the reason for telling this story is, I wonder when you read this chapter about Hannah and her coming to pray before the Lord, what picture you have of Hannah praying.

Now, I must admit, when I came to preach about this a few years ago, I came across this beautiful picture someone had painted of Hannah. And Hannah had come before the Lord. And in the picture, she was on her knees.

And it was like speckles of heaven or speckles of God or something was just pouring out of heaven upon her. It was a very beautiful piece of art. But I wonder how accurate it was.

The idea that actually we have this picture maybe of Hannah being all demure and pious and praying, oh Lord, we're full of grace and light saying, oh Lord, I haven't had a child yet.

Would you please grant me a child? I'll be ever so grateful. Amen. Or, was she like the second time? Was she actually, maybe not angry, maybe she was angry.

[ 9 : 34 ] If she wept bitterly in her deep anguish, it said, the idea that actually maybe she prayed out of her pain and her passionate prayer to say, Lord, why have you not given me a child?

Now, I don't know that you could say either prayer is wrong because I think both were born out of relationship. Both are times, if you like, when the woman who was kidnapped, over times are born out of a relationship with God.

Even through the Psalms, we have different people calling out to God in different times and experiences. The Psalmist would cry out and say, God, why are we, you let the wicked people overtake us?

Why do you let the wicked people prosper? They may be done with, may they be done away with. So even the Psalmists, you know, come out with a prayer of, Lord, why?

Why do you allow this to happen? And I wonder when we get to this picture of Hannah, what picture we have of her praying. And there's two things I think that I want to say about why it might have been the second version for Hannah.

[ 10 : 38 ] I think the first thing is this idea that she prays, she's deeply anguished and she weeps bitterly. Deeply anguished. Now sometimes it's good to go back to what some of these words mean because often in the Hebrew and the Greek, these words have a much wider meaning than sometimes our English translations allow for.

Last week, I preached on Mary and Martha. You know that occasion where Martha's busy in the kitchen preparing the food for Jesus and the disciples and she's busy clashing all her pots and pans, can't understand why Mary isn't helping her and goes to the Lord and says, why doesn't Mary help me with my preparations?

You go back to the passage and you realize food isn't mentioned, kitchen's mentioned, and obviously I've added the pots and pans. But it doesn't actually say that. We get that from the fact that obviously Martha says, will you help me with my preparations?

And the word preparations is, and forgive my pronunciation, is diakinii, something like that, which is diakina, or deacon was what we get. Which later on, of course, in the New Testament, is meant to represent a servant leader.

And so the idea that actually sometimes we need to get to scripture, it's like looking at a diamond. Actually there are different aspects of it. It sheds different light in different places that enable us to see the word in much perhaps deeper ways too.

[ 12 : 05 ] And so when we get to this idea that Hannah is deeply anguished, it can also mean she was tough-spirited. Tough-spirited.

And it doesn't give a picture to me of someone who was calmly on her knees praying in a nice pious and holy way. But tough-spirited to me gives a picture of someone who was, Lord, out of her pain, out of her passion, saying, but Lord, you have not provided.

You have not provided to your servant who comes up each year, is part of a sacrifice and the offering here, who's praying to you. And Lord, you know what it means for me not to have a child.

You've probably heard, Lord, and you know how the other wife mocks me. Why have you allowed your servant to be mocked in this way? Lord, you can provide. Why have you not done this?

And so I think there's a sense that she's praying out of passion and pain from her gut, if you like. The second thing is, is Eli thinks she's drunk.

[ 13 : 09 ] Eli, the first bouncer in the Bible. You know this? Eli, the first bouncer. Eli is on drunk and disorderly duty. The idea, of course, is that the fellowship offering that they come each year to give, the idea is, you come, you give your offering, and some of it is burnt, because that's God's portion, and the rest you eat, because it says about them eating and drinking.

So the first part is burnt, that's God's bit, and the second part you eat. Of course, where there's eating, there's drinking. And Eli is like, well, if you're not sober, you're not coming in.

So Eli's on bouncer duty at the temple, and he sees Hannah. And I think, yes, we could read it to say she's praying demurely, and her lips, she's not speaking out loud, but her lips are moving.

But if she's praying out of pain and passion, I've got a sense that actually she looks a bit more animated. And it's that, that out of that tough spiritedness, that Eli thinks, you know what, I wonder whether she's drunk.

And it's out of that, that Eli says, but you're a drunk woman, put away your drink. And then something changes.

[ 14 : 35 ] Something changes in what happens next. In the story of the kidnapping, the second time she's kidnapped, and she's marched through, and she prays for fire to fall down from heaven.

And she comes into the camp, and she crosses her arms, and she bows her head, as if to say, I can't believe why I'm here. What on earth's going on? I'm not happy to be here.

Obviously. I don't think any of us would be. The boss then comes over, and she thinks, this is the time when they're going to threaten to molest me.

This is the time when they're going to threaten to kill me. But instead, he says three words. Pray for us. Pray for us. She doesn't answer.

She's not sure if she's heard correctly. And he says, have you not heard? Pray for us. Pray for us. And so, she prays for them. She prays for them.

[ 15 : 38 ] These people who have kidnapped her, these people that, previously she was saying, Lord, why don't you rain down fire from heaven, and burn them all up? And here she is, having to pray for them. Obviously, she is released later.

That's why we have her testimony. Thank goodness. Praise God. But there's something in the episode, too, where I think something breaks for Hannah. It's a slightly comic episode going on in this account, too.

Because in her pain and her passion, as she prays out to say, Lord, please, will you give me a child? I'm so upset I don't have a child, that she does not eat. Does she?

It says she does not eat. She's so upset about this whole thing. And her husband, like men who are trying to fix their wives' problems, gives her a double portion. So here you have a woman who's not eating, because she's upset, and a man who says, well, let me give you twice as much food.

That's another preach, maybe. But something breaks when she is heard. Perhaps her husband, up until that point, has not heard her pain, has not heard where she's coming from.

[ 16 : 54 ] And as Eli challenges her and says, put away your wine and your beer, she says, but Lord, but, sir, I've not been drinking. This is my situation.

This is my prayer. This is my heartfelt plea to the Lord. And Eli hears her prayer. Does he make a promise? Has he heard from God?

Is it a blessing that he sends her on the way with, when he says, and may the Lord grant you what you have prayed for? We don't know. But she turns around, and she's now at peace.

The idea that she then does now go off and eat. And I think there are times to be like the persistent widow. Like Jesus said, there are times when we want to pray, and we want to be like the persistent widow, and knocks at the door, and keeps asking God.

And if the judge will eventually open the door to the persistent widow, won't he eventually also hear our prayer? But maybe there are also times and seasons, where we do, we pray out of our pain and our passion, and we say, Lord, won't you hear me?

[ 18 : 02 ] Won't you hear what I've said? That when we feel that we have been heard, that our prayer has been received, we lay it down. We let go, and we let God.

That having shared our prayer, having shared our desire, we allow then God to be God. Rather than telling God what he should or shouldn't do, we then say to God, I trust you now with the next step.

And I think when we come to this idea of sacrifice, and this idea that we understand that Hannah sacrifices her son, she gives up her son to the temple when he's weaned, and she brings her son Samuel back to the temple.

But also her sacrifice is here at this place before Eli the priest, as if to say, this is my prayer, I give it to God, and now I leave it with God.

I now trust God. That is my sacrifice, to leave it now, with God. And I trust God now, to deal with this. And I now go away, knowing that I've left it with God.

[ 19 : 11 ] That's also faith. That's also trust. That's also a sacrificial giving, isn't it? Of our own, perhaps, pain and passion and desire, to believe, well, Lord, you've heard my prayer, and I now leave it with you.

Let's pray.