

# Hannah - The Gracious, Praying Woman

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in 1st Samuel and chapter 1. And reading again at verse 17.

Then Eli answered, Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him. And she said, Let your servant find favor in your eyes. Then the woman went on her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord. Then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah, his wife, and the Lord remembered her.

And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, I have asked for him from the Lord. As we've been saying earlier on, one of the wonderful privileges that we have is the great privilege of prayer.

When we can go to the Lord anywhere, anytime, about anything. And sometimes we take that great privilege for granted.

[ 1 : 10 ] We, again, when we go to the Lord, we have to remember who the Lord is. That we are going to somebody who is king over all. He is the Lord of this whole universe.

The God who has been our dwelling place in all generations. And sometimes we take it for granted. We forget or we don't appreciate that we are in the presence of the God who knows everything.

The God who can do everything. And so often in our prayers, we underestimate who he is and what he can actually do. It is a privilege that, as I say, we so often underestimate.

I can't pick up the phone. Neither can you pick up the phone and phone the Queen. If you have something and you say to yourself, this is major, this is a huge thing in my life.

And I need help from the very highest. I want an audience with the Queen. I want to speak to the Queen about this. Or Theresa May. Supposing you had her number.

[ 2 : 20 ] She wouldn't have the first clue who you or I, who I was anyway. She wouldn't have a clue. But the wonderful thing is we can go to the Lord anywhere. And the Lord knows.

He knows everything about us. He knows you and me more than we even know ourselves. And the Lord invites us to come to him in prayer.

We don't have to work out and say, I wonder, can I come? The Lord, there is an appeal in Scripture to us to come to the Lord in prayer. And to bring everything to the Lord in prayer.

Of course, we know that prayer isn't simply bringing our needs before him, although that is a very vital part of prayer. At the very heart of prayer is our ability or the privilege or the opportunity given to us to get to know the Lord better.

That's how you get to know somebody. It's when you spend time with a person. You might know about a person, but you won't know the person until you spend time with them.

[ 3 : 28 ] And the more time you spend with a person, the more that you'll get to know that person. And that is true with regard to the Lord. We might know about the Lord, but until we spend time with him, we won't really know him.

And that's what the Lord wants us to do. And that's at the very heart of prayer. And yes, of course, we bring our petitions and our desires and our requests. But prayer also involves praise.

We spend time praising him, adoring him. We spend time confessing. We spend time interceding on behalf of others. We spend time with thanksgiving.

These are all parts and parcel of what prayer is. And, of course, we don't just come to the Lord with regard to what we would term the spiritual things of life.

For instance, like where we would say, where we come praying about our growth in grace, where we want to grow in grace. Or where we want to grow in our knowledge of the Lord.

[ 4 : 31 ] Or where we're seeking forgiveness. Or where we're seeking to become more Christ-like. Integral, important, vital parts of prayer. And we would term that and say, well, this isn't the spiritual aspect of prayer.

But, of course, we're to bring before the Lord everything. In everything. All the temporal things. All the ordinary things of life. You're filling up a form.

It's vital. You've lost it. You're turning the house upside down looking for it. You know, the first thing we should do is say to the Lord, Lord, I can't find this. Please help me to find it.

And, you know, this is where our faith grows. This is where we go to the Lord with all the little things. And if we're spiritually exercised as we should be, then there should be a crossover between the temporal and the spiritual.

It should all be one. And that is very evident in the life of Hannah. Hannah was such a woman. Where there wasn't a separation in her life between what was temporal and what was spiritual.

[ 5 : 39 ] It was all part of the one. And that's really how it should be in our own lives as well. Now, when we come to look at this great woman of prayer, she wasn't just a great woman of prayer.

She was a great woman. She was one of the great women that is featured in the Bible. Because not only is she a great woman of prayer, a great woman of faith, a great woman of grace, everything you see about Hannah is really quite remarkable.

There's a rich quality about her life, just in the way that she deals with everybody. And in the way that she depends upon the Lord.

She's a shiny example to us all. Now, at this particular time in Israel's history, Israel were without a king. It was the time of the judges.

And it was a time, we're told in the Bible, when everybody did that which was right in their own eyes. That's how it's summed up, that people just did what was right in their own eyes.

[ 6 : 46 ] Everybody did that which was right in their own eyes. That's a very dangerous place to be. And, you know, if you have this, what people say, follow your heart.

No. That's dangerous. Because if we know the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. And what is right in your eyes and what is right in my eyes and what is right in different people's eyes are all different.

So if that is the philosophy, that you just do what you think is right, then that actually leads to utter chaos. And that's how it was in the times of the judges.

The land was in chaos. And a land that was supposed to be consecrated to the Lord, it was God's land. He had set his name upon it.

He had set his place upon it. And yet they had forsaken him and they were away doing their own thing. And so, as we know, the book of Judges was a time of departing from the Lord and then the Lord would allow the Midianites or the Philistines or something or some people to come in and invade the land.

[ 7 : 56 ] And eventually, Israel would cry out to the Lord and the Lord would send a deliverer like Gideon or Samson or so on. So it was in this particular period where we find Elkanah and Hannah.

And it's very interesting that in some of the dark periods in Israel's history, when things are at a really low ebb and when God is just about going to work, that the Bible focuses in upon the birth of a baby.

For instance, when Israel were in an awful state in slavery in Egypt and they were beginning to cry out to God, the focus homes in on the birth of little baby Moses who was to become their deliverer. And here, again, Israel are in a really bad place. and this is just before the introduction, before God introduces to them the monarchy.

And again, the focus is upon the birth of a baby. It was the same before Jesus came into this world that the focus goes in on the birth of John the Baptist who was to be the forerunner of Jesus.

[ 9 : 15 ] And of course, there's quite a bit of focus on the birth of Jesus himself into this world. So it's very interesting that God very often takes the focus of all the cares that's going on and goes right into a home and into a family and into the birth of a baby.

And so that's really what we have here. And we see this man, Elkanah, and as far as we can see, he was a good man. He, from everything we can read about him, he seems to be a very kind and a gracious man and a godly man.

However, like so many people in that particular day, as we often find in biblical times and was the culture of the day, he did something that God never authorized.

He practiced having more than one wife. Polygamy. And from the very beginning, God, when he created Adam and Eve and brought Adam and Eve together, we've got to remember that it was one wife that he brought.

And in fact, it's very interesting how God directing Moses to write and he says, for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they too shall become one flesh, homing in on the closeness, the intimacy, the togetherness, the oneness of that particular relationship.

[ 10 : 47 ] And of course, it would always cause, inevitably cause tensions and difficulties when there would be more than one. And that happened over and over.

The Lord, of course, permitted it and as is often the case in the sovereign wisdom, he even blessed some of these relationships but it all was brought its trials and difficulties because you look at the life of Abraham, look at the life of Jacob, look at the life of David, look at so many of those who practiced that, there was often in the home there were tensions, divisions, murders, difficulties, breakups, all sorts of things going on.

So as we say, the Lord never authorized it although we see that he did permit you, allowed that to happen, although it was not something that he ever commanded or ever authorized.

Anyway, we find here that we find this man, Elkanah, with the two wives and I think it would go without saying that he would have married Peninnah for one reason because it tells us that Hannah was not able to have children and because you can see in this chapter that Elkanah has a great love for Hannah.

He loves Hannah with all his heart, there's no question. So you cannot understand why he would take to himself another wife for any other reason other than hoping that he would be able to have a family because there was an obsession in Israel at that time of having a family.

[ 12 : 36 ] And so he marries Peninnah as well. Now of course we know that not every couple are going to have children the same way as not every man or woman is going to marry and we should never put pressure upon people to marry it.

So for some people that's the way it is. Some people will remain single. Some people may not want to be, some people may choose to be. That's the way it is and we've always got to remember that God is sovereign over everything.

Over everybody. Sometimes we're trying to sort this in our own minds and that God is sovereign over every person's life and similarly over every couple's life and it's not always God's will that there will be a family and we've got to remember that and you know for us individually whether we are single or married and whether we have families or not it makes a huge difference to know that God is ruling and overruling our lives because if we're not aware of that then that creates far more tensions and more difficulties within our life but to know that God rules and overrules everything and so we find here that in God's providence that Hannah was unable to have children now what made things intolerable for Hannah was that

Peninnah mocked her and ridiculed her all the time Hannah was desperate to have a child absolutely desperate but Peninnah used this because Peninnah could see that Elkanah loved Hannah far more so she never missed an opportunity of having a go at her of mocking her of belittling her and of course this was distressing Hannah more and more and more and more and so we find that the story homes in on this time when they go up to Shiloh to worship the Lord for the annual year by year the sacrifice and when they were up there it was even it got worse this seemed to be when Peninnah was at that very worse towards Hannah and Hannah was so distressed over the whole thing and again we see Elkanah's great love to Hannah he was saying to her when she wouldn't eat verse 8 and Elkanah her husband said to her

Hannah why do you weep and why do you not eat am I not more to you than ten sons and we find in verse 5 how Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her but Hannah is in so much distress and so we find her going to the temple and we find Hannah there she is so distressed in spirit and she pours out her heart to the Lord and you know the Lord loves when we come like that tells us in the Bible that a broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice some of the greatest prayers that have ever been offered your greatest prayers that have ever been offered have often come from the time when your heart was broken when you were torn inside when your world was thrown upside down when things didn't match up and when you didn't know what was happening and you said Lord I don't nobody can understand what I'm going through

[ 16 : 15 ] I feel alone and isolated oh Lord you know when we come to the Lord like that the Lord hears and it's it's pleasing to the Lord because there is an element of faith at work there that sometimes isn't at other times there is an actual dependence upon the Lord we're cast upon the Lord and he and he's it is that's why it says it's a pleasing pleasing in his sight and so this is excuse me how Hannah was and she's so distressed about the situation that she promised that she makes a vow to the Lord and she says Lord if you will give me if you will give me a son I'll give him back to you all the days of his life it's really an it's an incredible prayer and we see here the great faith and devotion and the love and the heart of Hannah but it is quite a remarkable prayer and yet while she is praying in this way there is a man there the priest who should know a hundred times better is sitting there in judgment against her and as she is verse 12 and she continued praying before the Lord Eli observed her mouth there's Eli the priest he's the man in charge and he is passing critical judgment upon Hannah who is in an act of absolute devotion to the Lord and you know that's a very solemn thing and it happens far too often one of the things Jesus said was judge not that you be not judged and we're terrible for making judgments about situations and about people and we're looking at what people do or people don't do and we make our own assessments and invariably we're wrong and God hates when that happens particularly when somebody is doing something to the Lord and for the Lord for instance remember when when Miriam and Aaron Moses' brother and sister they challenged Moses and they got they got really jealous of Moses and they're saying how come it's only through you think you're the only one that's going to be able to speak to God God can speak to us just as much and they really went for Moses and as you remember Moses was such a meek person although strong as iron he was a hard strong character yet there was a meekness about him but God dealt with him God appeared in his glory God smote Miriam with leprosy because of what she was doing it was the same when David danced before the ark remember when they were bringing the ark back to Jerusalem and David was so full of joy so full of the Lord that he was dancing before the ark and just in this kind of free abandonment and his wife Saul's daughter looked out the window and she despised him in her heart and God judged her so that she remained childless all her days you see it's a very solemn thing to make a judgment against somebody just because somebody isn't doing something the way you think they should be doing it or in the way that you would expect them to be doing people when they are doing for the Lord sometimes people will do things for the Lord in ways that maybe we don't understand let us not judge it was the same with Mary of Bethany when she opened that box of alabaster ointment and poured it upon Christ she was being judged by the disciples Judas in particular what a waste and so many people look on the work that people do for the Lord as a waste where we must be careful not to be making wrong judgments so Eli Eli is here making making this wrong judgment and so he goes to Hannah and he says to her put away your wine he thought she was drunk because her lips were moving but she wasn't saying a word and does that not show us what a low ebb spiritual things were in that day things are low ebb in the day that we're living in but if you go into the church and as many churches are open as you know there's churches open just now in order for the visitors and those off cruise liners and so on to come in just to see it and spend a little time many churches are open and when you go in you often see people in the church sometimes you'll see people sitting their head down doing just exactly like Hannah was doing you don't automatically think oh that person must be drunk you automatically think that person is having a quiet time speaking to the Lord so that shows just how utterly dark the day was when the religious leader of the day automatically thinks that this woman is drunk because her lips are moving but he wasn't hearing anything and so he goes to rebuke her but Hannah says oh no and she told him how her heart was broken and she told him how it was and you know that's so important it was a bunion who said that that it's far better to have have prayer in your prayer to have heart without words than to have words without heart and I so through well that's how it was with Hannah and when Eli heard what it was he said to her oh go in peace and may the God of Israel grant you the petition that you made and it's here again we see the amazing what I love just the response of Hannah that Hannah then went on her way and ate and her face was no longer sad see the face

[ 22 : 40 ] Hannah had poured her heart out to the Lord she'd left it with the Lord and that was it she was back and she was back to her own self all her burdens had been cast upon the Lord cast your burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain you is what the word says and that's exactly what

Hannah had done and what Hannah discovered and then it tells us that in verse 19 the Lord remembered Hannah and very often when we find that word remembered with regard to the Lord it means that the Lord is going to take action and so the Lord enabled Hannah to have a baby and then we find it's just how remarkable what Hannah does of course she keeps little Samuel at home and Samuel is asked of the Lord that's what asked excuse me and she kept little Samuel at home until he was weaned until he was old enough and then she took him up to the temple and she presented him before Eli and there's that beautiful verse there in verse 27 and you can see

Hannah with little Samuel and she's saying for this child I prayed here is here is the answer to prayer for this child I prayed and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him isn't that wonderful and we see Hannah's faith and love as she presents little Samuel read us remember into quite it should be the safest place in the world it certainly wasn't because Eli's sons were terrible men and the whole priesthood was defiled everything was wrong and yet she entrusted little Samuel to the Lord's keeping little did Hannah know just what a giant in Israel and a giant in faith Samuel was going to become he was a child of prayer and a man of prayer all his days and you know the wonderful thing for

Hannah was that while she gave little Samuel her son back to the Lord in turn we read later on that Hannah became the mother of three sons and two daughters so when the Lord does something he doesn't do it by half she got Samuel but she got far more than Samuel and you know we never lose out by giving to the Lord never ever ever the Lord will never leave us out of pocket and I mean that not just financially I mean that in its broadest ways he will never leave us out of pocket when we give to him whether it's our time our talents whatever gifts we have whatever when you give to the Lord it's like you're loaning to the Lord and the Lord will give you back double treble ten times that's the way he works and so we have a great example here with this wonderful woman of a woman of prayer and of grace and of love and her life shows us how we should live before the Lord may she be an example to us bringing everything to the

Lord in prayer of giving our whole lives to the Lord as a living sacrifice and it is there that we will find the Lord doing in us and for us beyond what we could ask or think let us pray oh gracious God we pray to bless us today we give thanks for your word and we pray that we might know the riches of your grace upon us we pray that you will bless us and part us with your blessing bless the cup of tea and coffee in the hall afterwards and we pray that we may know your protection and your grace every single day we pray that you will guide us and keep us and do us good and take away our sin in Jesus name amen we're going to conclude saying in psalm 131 psalm 131 and this is from the Scottish Psalter psalm 131 it's on page 422 in the tunis

Bethesda my heart not haughty is oh lord mine eyes not lofty be nor do I deal in matters great or things too high for me I surely have myself behaved with quiet spirit and mild as child of mother wind my soul is like a wind child so on the three verses the whole psalm the tunis Bethesda my heart not haughty is my heart not haughty is oh lord mine eyes not lofty be nor do

[ 28 : 27 ] I deal in matters great or things too high for me I surely have myself behaved with quiet spirit and mild a child oh mother we my soul is like a weaned child upon the Lord let let all the hope of

Israel rely in from the time that present is unto eternity now may the grace mercy and peace of God the father son and holy spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more amen