

Answered Prayer

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] The chapter we read in 1 Samuel, chapter 1, and I want us to read it, verse 27. 1 Samuel, chapter 1, verse 27.

For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. One of the most wonderful blessings and privileges that God has given to us is the blessing and the privilege of prayer.

Anytime, anywhere, about anything, we can go to the Lord. That is really quite extraordinary. If we wanted to, supposing there was some major issue in our life, and we wanted real help, and we say to ourselves, I'm going to the very top here.

I want to speak to the Queen about this. I think our chances of getting a direct access to the Queen would be silks.

I don't think it could happen. Because I wouldn't even know how to begin if I wanted to approach the Queen.

[1 : 14] Even supposing I could get through all the obstacles and all the red tape, and some way was shown, and I was to pick up the phone, and she was to answer, and I was to say, well, it's Kenny here.

And she would say, Kenny who? Well, Kenny McLeod, Assistant Minister in Stornay. Even although I have been a citizen of her kingdom all my life, she has no idea who I am.

It would be different for Ivor. Ivor had tea with the Queen when I come to think of it. And he said, probably he's one of the most privileged people.

I don't know if anybody else has had that experience. Of course, what I'm saying here is quite different for him. But for myself, and I would imagine most people in general, she wouldn't have a clue.

And we wouldn't be able. We just wouldn't know how to get. But here we have the King. The King of Kings. The King who is above every ruler. Above every King, Queen, President, Governor.

[2 : 19] Not only in this generation, but has spanned all the generations of time. And we can go to him, as we said, anywhere, anytime, with anything.

And that is one of the most wonderful privileges that we could ever have. And we can call upon the Lord with anything. It doesn't matter how small or how great or how insignificant.

And that's exactly what we find here is this woman, Hannah. This woman whose heart was bursting with pain. With her own particular personal problem.

And you know, that's one of the wonderful things about the Lord. Is that we can go to him with whatever it is. And you know, as we go through life, I think probably one of the things sometimes that hurts us in life.

Is when there's something that is personal to you. Something that is paining you. And you feel burdened. And you feel sore. And you feel heavy.

[3 : 18] And you feel down about it. And nobody else seems to understand or to care. You may speak to others and it doesn't seem to mean anything to them.

And sometimes you can feel very crushed and isolated and alone. And you say, to whom can I turn? Well, here is the great thing. The Lord will never turn away any person who comes to him. If we come to him and pour out our hearts. It doesn't matter what it is. Whether it's a major thing or whether it is a little thing. It might be in the eyes of others.

It might be a little thing. For you, it might be major. However, for this woman, Hannah, her pain had reached a pressure point where she couldn't take it anymore.

And so we find that she makes her way to the temple to pray to the Lord. Now, I'm going to move backwards and forwards in this particular chapter.

[4 : 18] Maybe not following it in any way logically through. But we see this woman, Hannah, who was a lovely, and we can see very obviously, a lovely believing woman. And she was the wife, one of two wives that this man, Elkanah, had.

Now, Elkanah, it's obvious, was also a fine believing man. In the Old Testament, we find that quite a number of men had more than one wife.

It was not something that God ever sanctioned. It was not something that God ever authorized. But it would appear that it was something that happened.

But it never happened without causing its own problems and its own difficulties. From the very beginning, when God made man and woman, he made and brought one man and one woman together.

And the New Testament emphasizes this relationship. But in the Old Testament, we often find that men had more than one wife. Wherever it is, it always brought trouble.

[5 : 23] And when you look at the lives of many of the great saints, and you look at their family lives, and it brought trouble. You look at the life of Abraham, and there was trouble. You look at the life of Jacob, and there was trouble.

Look at the life of David, and there was trouble. The life of Solomon, there was trouble. It doesn't matter whose life that you go to. When you look at this multiplying of wives, it brought its own problems and difficulties into the home.

Anyway, here, it also brought its own problem, its own trials, its own difficulties. Because this woman, Hannah, was somebody, as we read here, who was unable to have children.

And we see that she goes, and her prayer is about this very thing. She is specific in prayer.

And that's one of the things that we ought to be with. If we have a problem, if we have difficulties, and we go to the Lord, let's tell him exactly how it is. Let's spell it out. Some people say, well, I don't know how to pray.

[6 : 28] Just talk. Talk to the Lord. Talk to him and tell him how you feel the pain that's in your heart, the difficulties that you face, whatever it is. Well, that's what Hannah did.

And the wonderful thing was that later on, she was able to go back to the temple. And there she was with little Samuel, and she was able to say, for this child I prayed.

Lord, she would be, she prayed and prayed, Lord, give me a child, and I will give this child back to you. Well, sometime later, she was able to go back to the temple and to meet old Eli and say, this is the child I prayed for.

And you know, it's a wonderful thing when we are able to see the answer to prayer. Sometimes we will see the answer to prayer in a physical, in a tangible way where it's something that we can hold or handle or see.

And we say, well, you know, look, that's what I prayed for. But often what we pray for are things which, say, for instance, we are going through a difficult time.

[7 : 33] And we're finding that what we've got to deal with is more than we can cope with.

Sometimes we pray for the strength to cope with what we're having to cope with. And the Lord gives us that strength.

Or the grace to bear with, whether it is a bereavement or a loss. And you're saying, this is more than I can bear. And you say to the Lord, Lord, please give me the grace to bear with the pain.

To bear with the trauma. And he does. And you're able to look back. And you say, you have to acknowledge and say, well, it was more than me that managed to get through this.

And you realize that it was God who helped you and answered your prayer. And give you the strength and give you the grace to cope. Sometimes we pray for the love in order to forgive somebody.

Somebody who's done something wrong to us and really hurt us. Rather than seek revenge, we seek for the spirit of forgiveness. It doesn't come naturally.

[8 : 35] And the Lord helps us to do that. So there are lots of ways that we look back and we see God answering prayer for us. Now, as we see here, Hannah's problem stemmed from her being childless and unable to have a child.

And there are many people who can enter into Hannah's sorrow and Hannah's problem. But what made it so much worse for Hannah was that this other wife, Peninnah, and in all probability, the reason that Elkanah took another wife was because Hannah wasn't able to have a child.

And that this other wife, Peninnah, was a thorn in Hannah's side. She kept tormenting her and mocking her.

And that is an incredible, fearful form of abuse. So Hannah's pain at being childless was intensified so much by this woman who was taking great pleasure and delight in mocking and tormenting Hannah because of her condition.

And, you know, it's wonderful when you see how the Lord had pity and the Lord heard Hannah's prayer. But what we've also got to remember here is that it shows us that God is sovereign over all things.

[9 : 58] Because although Elkanah loved Hannah more than that, because it tells us that in verse 5, because he loved her. He was, he was, Hannah was Elkanah's first love and great love.

And that's why it tells us that the Lord had closed her womb. So we've got to realize that the Lord is sovereign over all these things.

And you know what makes a great difference to our lives? When we believe in and accept the sovereignty of God over all things.

Because I think life must be very difficult if we do not have an awareness and an understanding of God's government and God's rule.

I would imagine that when things go wrong in life, it must be very difficult where we have no sense of God. No sense of his direction and his control and his authority.

[10 : 57] I would imagine there must be an awful lot of despair and hurt in these times. And it's a great thing that when we're able to see that God is over all things.

Anyhow, in this particular incident or episode that we find here, we find that Elkanah and Hannah and Peninnah, they go up to Shiloh up to the time to worship.

And these were difficult times. These were tough times. These were the times when the book of Judges were written. And remember what it says in the book of Judges about these days.

These were the days when everybody did what was right in their own eyes. In other words, people did whatever they wanted to do. If it felt right, let's do it.

There were no absolutes. There were no boundaries. The boundaries could change at any time.

Whatever you wanted to do, you could shift the goalposts, as it were. And if it was all right for you, irrespective of how much hurt and pain, how much it put other people out, how much you destroyed other people's lives, that didn't matter as long as it was all right for you.

[12 : 08] That's the kind of day it was. And, you know, to a certain extent, when you look at that, you say to yourself, you know, there's nothing new under the sun. Because in many ways, that's kind of like what it is today.

Where people just, many people will do just what they want. When you just take, for instance, one area of life and all the sort of, the lightish, thuggish behavior where people, what we may term anti-social behavior, people have no respect.

Or some people have no respect for people's lives, for people's property, whatever. I'm going to do what I want. It doesn't matter. And you can see this total disregard for anything that any other person has, even to their own life.

And when society goes down to that level, we're in a bad way. Well, as we say, there's nothing new under the sun because that's exactly what it was like in those days.

Where everybody, that's what we're told, everybody did what was right in their own eyes. Whatever they felt like doing, they went and did it. And the problem was that this had worked its way right through, not only through society at large, but right into the very church life as well.

[13 : 28] Because while Eli, the priest, was a good man, his sons were anything but. They were evil. They were immoral and they had a complete defiance and disregard for the Lord.

In fact, in chapter 2, we're told that they didn't know the Lord. And really, that's quite an extraordinary thing. Here are priests who are leading the worship.

Priests who are in the place, the appointment, to rule and to work in the things of God. And they didn't know the Lord. And if ever the church comes to that place or point, where the leadership do not have a real, living, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, then the church is in trouble. And what happened in Israel will always happen because God visited Israel in judgment. And it wasn't long until Eli himself, although he was a good man, he died, his sons were killed, Israel were defeated, the ark was taken away, the ark of the Lord.

All these things which showed God's judgment against them. However, we're jumping ahead here a wee bit. But the point I'm making about this is, the temple life, remember, where it should have been a beautifully structured life, lived in honor to God, was anything but.

[15:01] It was a dangerous, dangerous environment even to live. And yet it's into this environment that Hannah is going to bring her little boy.

She's going to hand over her boy to Eli. Eli into an environment, although Eli was a good man, his family and what was happening there was anything but.

And at a human level, it would be very easy for Hannah to say, oh no, I cannot put my child into that environment. But her trust was in the Lord.

And you know, to a certain extent it's the same today, because many people will say, oh, you know, it's too dangerous to have children today. We cannot have children because of the environment that we live in.

There's so much uncertainty. With the whole area of climate change and the whole insecurity of the financial system and with the whole way of national security and terrorism and all these kind of things.

[16:05] And people will say, we're heading to some apocalyptic nightmare or whatever. But we've got to trust the Lord. The Lord, remember, rules over everything.

Nothing changes. It was an uncertain world there. Every generation, we live in an uncertain world. It's one of the things that we are forever discovering.

Let us be quite, we live in this uncertain world. But if you and some of you here, the older people will have grown up.

Say, for instance, in the 30s, way back. And after the First World War, it was made out. There will never be another World War. And yet, you can see how the climate changed in the 30s into such growing uncertainty and then into all the fear and the terror that took place.

Every generation, in different ways, has experienced uncertainty. But it's into this environment we've got to go and we've got to trust the Lord. And that's what Hannah did.

[17:14] And what we will see just a little later on is the key to Hannah bringing her son to the Lord was twofold. One was that little Samuel was a child of prayer who was prayed over.

And secondly, Hannah had made that vow to the Lord that she was going to bring whatever child was given to her if she was given a child that she would hand back to the Lord.

And she was trusting the Lord in these things. As I said, we're jumping back and forth here. Back to where this day when Hannah was at Shiloh and she couldn't take any more.

And she made her way into the temple. And it was there that she began to pour out her heart to the Lord. And Eli the priest saw her. Now again, this is a reflection of the day in which they were living. If I came into the church here and I saw a woman just sitting down supposing I just came in during the day one day and I saw a woman down there and she was sitting there with her head bowed and her mouth moving I would naturally assume she was praying.

[18:28] Eli naturally assumed she was drunk. That was the first conclusion that he came to. So it shows the kind of environment the kind of culture the kind of life that was being lived in these days.

And so he goes and he rebukes Hannah for being drunk. And Hannah poured out her heart to the priest and told him what it was like. So Eli, when he heard and discovered what was happening he says these lovely words of verse 17 and he says then Eli answered go in peace and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.

And if there's anybody in here today whose heart is sore and who is privately speaking to the Lord and pouring out their heart to the Lord I would love that these words would be the words that you would hear and the words that you would take as well.

To go in peace and the God of Israel grant you your petition that you have made. And then we read that the Lord remembered Hannah. That's what we read in verse 19.

Now whenever we find this that the Lord remembered it doesn't mean that all of a sudden the Lord in the way that we remember all of a sudden the Lord remembered oh Hannah.

[19:49] No. Whenever we read the word these words the Lord remembered it means that the Lord is coming to act to take action.

it's the same as it says the Lord remembered Noah at the time of the flood. When we pray for the Lord not to remember our sins our iniquities anymore it means that we're asking the Lord not to take action against our sins and our iniquities.

And so the Lord remembered Hannah and her prayer and she conceived and gave birth to a son and she called him Samuel. Here's another we're talking to the young folk about what a name means well here's what Samuel means because I asked the Lord for him.

And so we find Hannah standing in the temple with her precious son that she had prayed over. We pray over our children as well because they are precious to us.

Every parent cares for their child more than they care even for their own life. We want the best for our children. The best physically mentally emotionally socially and it's very easy to be caught up in purely the temporal things of life.

[21 : 12] But today I want us to focus and to think about the most important thing of all is the soul spiritually. And we pray for our children.

For this child I prayed and I know today that the two children who are being baptized are children who are being prayed over. And that is an awesome privilege to be brought up as a child of prayer. to be brought up being prayed for. And I would like the congregation here today to remember and I know that you will today to pray for the children who are being baptized.

But pray for them tomorrow as well. Don't just pray for them today pray tomorrow. Don't just pray for them next week pray for them next year. You see it's very easy when we're gathered together at a time of baptism.

And here's the focus and we say it's lovely to see and so it is. One of the great pleasures one of the great joys where we see children being brought up and where those responsible for the children are wanting to bring them up within the sphere of the church to experience the blessing of God.

[22 : 32] It's a wonderful thing. But let's pray for them. Let's remember them. And that God will bless them and keep them. And may the Lord who Hannah trusted in be the Lord that we will all trust in as we will put our life in his care and in his keeping.

Let's pray. Lord our God we pray to help us and to bless us at this time. We pray to guide us in our continued worship.

We pray to give us peace and to know the riches of thy grace. Bless us and keep us and take away from us our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen. Amen.