

Hannah's Prayer

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[0 : 00] turn back to a reading first samuel in particularly chapter 2 verse 1 to verse 11 where we see hannah's prayer or hannah's song as some identify it too there's both a sense of praying to god and a sense of praising god in this have you ever made a promise to god a promise at a time perhaps when you've been in a difficult situation and your promises start with the words lord if you help me through this i will and then you can add your promise at the end of that i'm sure we've all found ourselves in different situations where we have cried out to god for help with a sense we've said to god too that if you bring me through this well this is what i will do for you but have you kept that promise or if the lord has helped you through a certain situation have you just carried on and just kept going without acknowledging god's help in it or god's helping you through it well the life of of hannah here is a quite remarkable life she is a woman of faith and such a great faith as we see with so many women through the scriptures she was one who had a real trust in god but so often her faith was tested and so often her faith led to very difficult experiences like we read in chapter one of first samuel as you look at chapter one you see the struggles that she faced in life hannah was married to a good man elkanah but as it was in those days there wasn't often just one wife in the marriage and hannah was a partner to elkanah but also there was another woman penina who was in the marriage as well hannah loved her husband and her husband loved her very much too but there was an issue in the midst of this relationship hannah much as she longed to couldn't bear children whereas penina the other wife she was able to bear children conceived and gave elkanah a family but you're given an insight into just how much elkanah loved her in chapter one when you see that even as they were together elkanah would give a portion to penina at the time of going up to worship but to hannah he would give a double portion there was this strong bond between them but there was this difficulty in their midst as well and you see another side of this relationship too in verse six of chapter one when hannah was unable to give birth to give birth to a child it says the lord had closed her womb well her rival as it says there in verse six and that's a strong word there her rival penina there was this rivalry between them she mocked she provoked her grievously it says there in verse six to irritate her because the lord had closed her womb and this would have been sore for hannah such a soreness in her life and it was going on year after year but in the midst of this you see what great faith that she had and what great trust that she put in the lord it's a remarkable faith a remarkable faith that leads to an astounding promise from god as she prays to him it says in verse 11 as she was longing for a child oh lord of hosts

if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant but will give to your servant a son then i will give him to the lord all the days of his life she asked the lord for help and she made this promise to the lord if you give your servant a son then i will give him to the lord all the days of his life can you imagine being in this situation was it a request i was maybe doubting well he's not going to give me the son that i so desire so i'm not going to have to keep this promise no it wasn't it was a request of faith with a promise being made and that's the promise that we see that she kept well so we read uh in chapter the end of chapter one verse 21 down to the end of chapter one there in verse 27 for this child i prayed and the lord has granted me my petition that i made to him therefore i have lent him to the lord as long as he lives he has lent to the lord she kept her promise she fulfilled her her vow and after she had weaned the child after maybe three or four years she brought him to the temple and gave him to the lord it's a wonderful it's a remarkable story the story of hannah but she puts the child in the best place she gives the child to the hands of god and is there any greater blessing than that but what does she do after this that's what we want to focus on this evening how was she after she had kept this promise how difficult it would have been you can just imagine to give her son to eli to look after him to raise him there in in the place of worship how hard it would have been and how was she afterwards was she despondent was she afraid do you see her questioning what she has done just full of regret and wishing she could just bring him back well what we see in chapter chapter two is a word of praise a word of prayer to god she praises god in this wonderful prayer in this wonderful song full of great truths about god as well as the great trust that she has in god and it's a powerful reminder to ourselves to every one of us men and women together that we come looking to the same god that we come able to praise and worship the same god but our trust in this same god we are reminded here in this prayer of hannah that our worship to god is not just as minister giving a sermon as minister giving a sermon our worship to god is collective all of us together we come singing praise to god we come offering up our prayers together to god our praise our prayers they're not just starter before the main course they are part of the whole of worship they are part of the main course of the main course of coming to praise god we express our thanksgiving to god in prayer

we express it to him in song we express it to him as we receive his word and i want us to look at this prayer tonight and see this prayer this song of hannah what it says to us both about the truths of god and our own commitment and our own commitment and our own commitment to him as well we see hannah's commitment to him and we see for ourselves is that our same commitment to god are we made promises to god and are we keeping our promises to god and therefore rejoicing in god and the first thing that we see here in hannah's prayer is this god knows that's one of the key things throughout hannah's life not just in the prayer before us here but as you look back to chapter one as well how you see that god knows her situation even though it's going on for a long time this pain that she is suffering this mocking the penina is showing towards that even though that is going on we see that the lord knows because you see here hannah's prayer begins with such strong confidence of who god is in verse two there's no one there is nothing who compares to god in verse two there is none holy like the lord there is none besides you there is no rock like our god there is none besides you and what you have to remember that is in this situation hannah was surrounded by a people who would have been worshipping many gods they would have been looking to to other gods gods that divided their attention but yet hannah is able to come with these words there is none besides you in all the years of waiting in all the years of longing she didn't go away and try any other god even though maybe people would have said as they often do your god's not listening your god's not hearing by this god she knows there is none but god there is none besides you and in this there is a reminder for her too of the contrast there was in the relationship that she had in her marriage and the relationship she had with god there is the contrast of the shared love the shared love that she experienced with elkanah who had two wives therefore divided loyalties but she shared a love with god that was not divided at all there is none besides you there is no rock like our god through all her years of anguish and pain she still knew she still knew that god was there her commitment is not divided he is god and there is no other and there's a lesson in that for ourselves even as the world will tell us that god is not real that we can depend on other things apart from god we can say with hannah there is none besides you there is no other who is like you there is no other who is worthy of all our worship there is no rock like our god he is the security of our lives back in deuteronomy chapter 4 verse 39 there it says

know therefore today and laid to your heart that the lord is god in heaven above and on earth beneath there is no other and it's a reminder there in the heaven above but he's not always distant to us in that sense because it says and on the earth beneath everywhere god is and there is none besides him and the wonderful thing as you look at hannah's life is she knows this god she loves this god she worships this god and she is in this relationship of fellowship with god even when she was accused of being drunk by eli in chapter one hannah answered in verse 15 no my lord i am a woman troubled in spirit i have drunk neither wine nor strong drink but i've been pouring out my soul before the lord she is in this relationship with god she is in this relationship with god there is no one else to go to it's a powerful reminder to ourselves we can depend on god and we must come to god the way to assurance is god is not to look to ourselves or beyond ourselves to anyone else apart from god in all his attributes and in all his promises to us there is none besides you and so this coming to god in prayer is a reminder to us as she she draws on scripture here it's to know our bibles well and to pray through the word of god when you come to god in prayer do you come with his word and do you lean on his promises as you pray lord you have said and as you go through the bible what do you see that god has said he's made so many promises to his people do you pray his promises to him do you plead them with him and what's quite remarkable about hannah's prayer here is if you have a bible with cross references or a little exercise for when you go home this evening or tomorrow is to look at the cross references in chapter 2 verse 1 to 11 and to look how many reference psalms there are many references to the psalms in this prayer but the prayer came before many of the psalms were written the psalms are referenced and they appeared all the psalms that we're singing this evening are from the cross references from this prayer referenced in other psalms and we've been singing these these words these promises of god as a powerful reminder to us to lean on and depend on the word of god so when you look to god as we see with hannah here we see that we can depend on god in all his promises because he knows our every situation he knows our every need but there is also the assurance of god to us as well as hannah's love for god there is the assurance of god's love for us as well in verse 3 talk no more so very proudly let not arrogance come from your mouth for the lord is a god of knowledge and by him actions are weighed the lord knows us he knows and sees

all things and the remarkable thing in that is that he loves us he loved hannah you see that even in the midst of her pain he was still a god who was with her and you see it as his promise to her is fulfilled he shows his love to her and that's the assurance we can take too that we can find in god the one who knows us and knows all our faults and yet still loves us and there when you go through these verses again you see the great knowledge that that god has of us how powerful it is he says his love for us is a steadfast love a covenant love he's always promised his people that i will be your god and you will be my people and hannah worships god in the knowledge of his promises and the knowledge of his love and that is how we come to god too or how we should come to god too in the knowledge of all his promises but in the assurance of his love too god knows every one of us he knows our every circumstance our every joy or every pain and he loves us with a steadfast love that's the first thing we see the second thing is this god strengthens and surrounds god is always with his people that is so evident but what it is here we see even more is just how powerful that witness is to us that no matter what the circumstances are that we can go on in his strength when god answered hannah's prayer and she kept her promise she gave samuel back to the lord i have lent him to the lord as long as he lives he has lent to the lord she said at the end of chapter one you might expect the sense of despair over her son samuel but as we see instead she goes in to this praise of god and as you see with god who knows and sees in this psalm in this in this prayer he is also the god of providence and he is the god of purpose he is a god of greatness even in the midst of human weakness and part of the theme of this psalm is that god works through the weak through the humble and not the strong look at verse six there it says the lord kills and brings to life the lord kills another way of looking that the lord allows the providence of life problems and difficulties to come our way but in the midst of all that it says and brings to life he is able to deliver us from them and you see through verse six to verse eight that there's many contrasts there he brings down to shoal and raises up he makes poor and makes rich he brings low and he exalts so it goes on there's all these different kinds of contrasts but it's a reminder to us that in our strengths he is there with us in our weakness he is there with us it's so similar to what paul says in the book of philippians paul himself who went through so many

[20 : 23] experiences of ups and downs in life he says in the book of philippians i have known what it is to be to be healthy i've known what it is to be weak i have known what it is to be in poverty i've known what it is to be in plenty he's had all these contrasting experiences but what is his testimony i can do all these things through christ who strengthens me i can go through it all through christ who strengthens me and what you see here in verse nine is quite similar to what paul is expressing there in verse nine it says he will guard the feet of his faithful ones but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness for not by might shall a man prevail it's not through our own strength but through the strength that god gives and this is the strength that hannah has known through all our years she has known the presence and the strength and the help of god and that's again a lesson for ourselves how do we go on do we go on in our own strength or do we go on in the strength of god a problem so often is that we're not too weak for god to work in us but that we're too strong we trust ourselves we can think we think we can do it in our own strength or maybe just a little boost from god have you ever gone to the doctor when you're not feeling well and you think you know what you're going to go in for you're going to ask doctor just give me a pill and i'll carry on i'll be able to go on then but the doctor knows best and the doctor will sometimes say no a pill is not what you need here you need something more serious than that something more major and is that the way we come to god sometimes god just just give me a little boost to help me go on here when god is actually saying no stop be still and know that i am god that's the position that hannah was brought to and she was willing she stopped before god she pleaded with god knowing lord only you can do this is that our approach with god as well if we go on in our own strength how will we ever praise god aright we'll only praise ourselves or we'll praise others we ask for god's blessing but then we go on and do things in our own way we might even say to others i'd like this and they might get on well but who will get the praise they'll thank us instead of god better to say ask god take it to him be like hannah come and give your soul pour out your soul to the lord and then if he provides or if he gives you your request you praise him you look at psalm 107 it's a psalm full of different situations in life where people are coming through difficulties along the way and what happens in each situation they cry to the lord in their trouble and he delivers them and there's always a reminder at the end of each section of psalm 107 oh that men to the lord would give praise we praise god if it hadn't been for the difficulties and trials that hannah had to

experience would she have ever offered up this prayer of praise it was only through it that she could come to the point where there is this rich prayer of praise to god full of the truths of who god is how weak we are but how great god is and that's sometimes the way we have to experience life too to go through the difficulties to go through the dark periods to go through the troubles but to know that god is there to strengthen and god is there to help perhaps at this point hannah was given a glimpse of why god had allowed penina in her life the one who mocked her her rival as she was called who made it so hard for her and yet did that not shape her faith and strengthen her faith god's providence is not always easy but god's providence always has a purpose and so often the purpose is that we might seek the lord even more that in our weakness we will come to him psalm 34 another psalm that's referenced here this poor man cried the lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles and then the psalm goes on to say the angel of the lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them there is these times of trouble the assurance of the assurance of the presence of god who delivers that's the god that hannah knew and was praising here is that not the god that we know too now we can give testimony to that the lord has been our strength the lord has been our help in the poorness of life in the riches of life in all experience there is none like him the final thing i want us to take from this prayer of hannah's the god who saves you notice how the song this prayer begins my heart exalts in the lord my strength is exalted in the lord my mouth derides my enemies because i rejoice in your salvation there is a note of salvation there is a note of salvation here then you notice how it ends in verse 10 the lord will judge the ends of the earth he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed what's interesting about this is hannah is speaking of a king he will give strength to his king but as yet israel has no king but she is getting an insight into the plans of god and the purposes of god for his people that god will provide a way a way to salvation i rejoice in your salvation the hannah says here when you go forward into the new testament into the book of luke chapter one you've got another song another prayer there the song of mary and in that song mary says this my spirit rejoices in god my savior so similar to what we have here and what was mary rejoicing in

the savior who was the king king jesus throughout the scriptures we are given assurances and confidence that god is a god of salvation that he will provide for his people and god sees every life in such a personal way and when you look at hannah here when she is praising the your salvation as she says and the king who will come and exalt the power of his anointed there's a sense here of not just hannah's life but a far greater work that god is doing a salvation for all of his people how he would provide a king so that all people who trust in him can rejoice in that salvation too from our perspective we see the bigger picture as we turn from the old to the new testament when we see the fulfillment of what hannah is saying to us here that god has a plan and a purpose not just for the son of hannah to be given over to the service of the lord but for the son of god who would come as a servant of his people who would come and give his life for his people that is who we are being directed to through this prayer through this song to the lord jesus christ and that is the one who keeps his every promise for us here we see hannah who made a promise to god not in a rash way not in a way doubting that god could do it but through faith and she kept her promise do we keep ours i'm sure we've broken many of the promises that we've made to god but the great thing is god never breaks any of his promises to us and it's on that we rely the same as hannah was relying on the promises of god so do we somebody once said you can't break god's promises by leaning on them and so may we lean on all the promises of god the one who is our salvation the one who gave strength to his king to come and be the messiah the anointed one who gave his life for our salvation let us pray oh lord our gracious god we thank you for all the promises of your word and we ask that you will bless them to us and help us to lean upon them even as hannah so long ago where she saw the lord's strength and the lord's presence with her the lord's providence in her life and difficulties but also in great joy we pray lord that in our experience of all the highs and lows that we will rejoice and exalt the lord who is alone worthy of all our praise for there is none beside you hear our prayers lord and continue with us pardoning our sins in jesus name amen out po own so thank you thank you thank you thank you