

“Walking by Faith: The Commitment of Hanna”

The Reflection Year Series

Scripture:

Samuel 1: 1-20 (NIV)

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite^[a] from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. ³ 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. ⁴ Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶ Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷ This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. ⁸ 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?”

⁹ Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD's house. ¹⁰ In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ 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.” ¹² As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, “How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine.” ¹⁵ “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. ¹⁶ Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.”

¹⁷ Eli answered, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.”

¹⁸ She said, “May your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. ¹⁹ Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰ So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel,^[b] saying, “Because I asked the LORD for him.”

Subject Question: What three Personal characteristics are found in the life of Hanna that proved she was a trustworthy and committed person in her relationship with God?

Compliment answer: Hanna knew Sorrow, Hanna developed Character, and Hanna Kept her Word.

Big Idea: The three Personal characteristics that are found in the life of Hanna that proved she was a trustworthy and committed person in her relationship with God are: Hanna knew Sorrow, Hanna developed Character, and Hanna Kept her Word.

Homiletical Idea: “Trusting in God... Trusted By God...”

Purpose: I want the congregation to discern for themselves the good, personal characteristics of Hanna and decide individually if they are as committed and trustworthy in their own relationship with God.

Introduction: Hanna, the mother of a king maker... Hers was an extraordinary life that reaped Heavenly blessings. And yet, her motherhood almost never happened. We begin our story considering a loved wife, who was indeed barren—no children, no heir... no king- maker in the making. But her commitment and her trustworthiness eventually led to a blessed and happy life. Her life was eventually extraordinary, but her roots were in the very mundane. Let’s explore the life of this woman and consider the life events that shaped her character and determined her destiny. Who knows... maybe there is a lesson in here for you and me.

Hannah (Hebrew חַנָּה *Hannāh*; pronounced in English as /ˈhænə/^[1]) is the wife of Elkanah mentioned in the First Book of Samuel. According to the Hebrew Bible she was the mother of Samuel.

Samuel (/ˈsæm.juː.əl/^[1]; Hebrew: שְׁמוּאֵל, Modern *Shmu'el*, Tiberian *Šəmû'ēl*; Arabic: صموئيل *Ṣamū'īl*; Greek: Σαμουήλ *Samouēl*; Latin: *Samvel*; Strong's *Shemuwel*), is a leader of ancient Israel in the Books of Samuel in the Hebrew Bible. He is also known as a prophet by Christians and Muslims, and is mentioned in the second chapter of the Qur'an, although not by name.^[2]

His status, as viewed by rabbinical literature, is that he was the last of the Hebrew Judges and the first of the major prophets who began to prophesy inside the Land of Israel.

He was thus on the cusp of two eras. According to the text of the Books of Samuel, he also anointed the first two kings of the Kingdom of Israel: Saul and David.

(Commitment is more than just words)

Groundwork:

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

A worthy portion - Probably as in the margin. Naturally she would have had a single portion of the sacrifice (compare 1 Samuel 9:23), but because of his love to her he gave her a double portion, enough for two people (compare Genesis 43:34).

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

6. her adversary also provoked her sore—The conduct of Peninnah was most unbecoming. But domestic broils in the houses of polygamists are of frequent occurrence, and the most fruitful cause of them has always been jealousy of the husband's superior affection, as in this case of Hannah.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

And her adversary also provoked her sore,... That is, Peninnah, the other wife of Elkanah; for when a man had more wives, two or more, they were usually at enmity to one another, as the two wives of Socrates were, being always jealous lest one should have more love and respect than the other from the husband; and this woman provoked Hannah one time after another, and continually, by upbraiding her with her barrenness; and this was another reason why Elkanah did all he could to comfort her, not only because the Lord had restrained her from bearing children, but because also she that envied and emulated her sadly provoked her: for to make her fret; and be uneasy, and murmur at and complain of her unhappy circumstances: some render it, "because she thundered" (l) against her; that is, Peninnah was exceeding loud and clamorous with her reproaches and scoffs, which were grievously provoking to Hannah. So said Socrates, when Xantippe first scolded at him, and then poured foul water on him: did not I say, says he, that Xantippe first thunders, and then rains (m)? because the Lord had shut up her womb; it was this Peninnah upbraided her with, and at which Hannah fretted and grieved. (l) "propterea quod intonabat contra eam", Piscator. (m) Laert. in Vit. Socrat. p. 112.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

1:9-18 Hannah mingled tears with her prayers; she considered the mercy of our God, who knows the troubled soul. God gives us leave, in prayer, not only to

ask good things in general, but to mention that special good thing we most need and desire. She spoke softly, none could hear her. Hereby she testified her belief of God's knowledge of the heart and its desires. Eli was high priest, and judge in Israel. It ill becomes us to be rash and hasty in censures of others, and to think people guilty of bad things while the matter is doubtful and unproved. Hannah did not retort the charge, and upbraid Eli with the wicked conduct of his own sons. When we are at any time unjustly censured, we have need to set a double watch before the door of our lips, that we do not return censure for censure. Hannah thought it enough to clear herself, and so must we. Eli was willing to acknowledge his mistake. Hannah went away with satisfaction of mind. She had herself by prayer committed her case to God, and Eli had prayed for her. Prayer is heart's ease to a gracious soul. Prayer will smooth the countenance; it should do so. None will long remain miserable, who use aright the privilege of going to the mercy-seat of a reconciled God in Christ Jesus.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(11) **And she vowed a vow.**—The vow of Hannah contained two solemn promises—the one pledged the son she prayed for to the service of the Eternal all the days of his life. The mother looked on to a life-long service in the ritual of the Tabernacle for him, but the Being who heard her prayer destined her son for higher work; in his case the priestly duties were soon merged in the far more responsible ones of the prophet—the great reformer of the people. The second promise undertook that he should be a Nazarite. Now the Nazariteship included three things—the refraining from intoxicating drinks, the letting the hair grow, and the avoiding all ceremonial defilement by corpses even of the nearest kin. Samuel was what the Talmud calls a perpetual Nazarite. These strange restrictions and customs had an inner signification. The abstinence from wine and strong drink typified that the Nazarite determined to avoid all sensual indulgence which might cloud the mind and render the man unfit for prayer to, and work for, the Lord; the avoiding contact with the dead was a perpetual outward protest that the vow-er of the solemn vow renounced all moral defilement, that he gave up everything which could stain and soil the life consecrated to the Eternal's service; the untouched hair, which here is especially mentioned, was a public protest that the consecrated one had determined to refrain from intercourse with the world, and to devote the whole strength and fulness of life to the Lord's work. The LXX. (Greek) Version here inserts the words, “and he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink,”

wishing to bring the passage into stricter accordance with Numbers 6. The original Hebrew text, however, contents itself with specifying merely the outward sign of the untouched hair, by which these solemnly consecrated ones were publicly known.

Pulpit Commentary

Verses 12-18. - She continued praying. Hannah's prayer was long and earnest, but in silence. She spake not in, but "to her heart," to herself. It was an inward supplication, which only her own heart and God heard. Eli watched, and was displeased. Possibly silent prayer was something unusual. It requires a certain advance in civilisation and refinement to enable a supplicant to separate the petition from the outward expression of it in spoken words, and a strong faith before any one can feel that God hears and knows the silent utterances of the heart (comp. Matthew 8:8-10). Naturally men think that they shall be heard for their much speaking, and for speaking aloud. Unused then to such real prayer, Eli, as he marked the quivering lips, the prostrate form, the face flushed with earnestness, came to the coarse conclusion that she was drunken, and with equal coarseness bids her "put away her wine from her," that is, go and sleep off the effects of her debauch. Hannah answers indignantly, "No, my lord." She is "a woman hard of spirit;" (see marg.), heavy hearted, as we should say, and she had been lightening her heart by pouring out her troubles before Jehovah. She is no "worthless woman;" for Belial is not a proper name, though gradually it became one (2 Corinthians 6:15), but means **worthlessness**, and "a daughter of worthlessness" means a bad woman. "**Grief**" is rather **provocation, vexation**. Hannah cannot forget the triumph of her rival, exulting over her many portions, while for her there had been only one. Convinced by the modesty and earnestness of her answer, Eli retracts his accusation, gives her his blessing, and prays that her petition may be granted. And Hannah, comforted by such words spoken by the high priest (John 11:51), returned to the sacrificial feast, which apparently was not yet finished, and joined in it, for "she did eat, and her countenance was to her no more," that is, the grieved and depressed look which she had so long borne had now departed from her. There is no reason for the insertion of the word **sad**. HANNAH'S PRAYER ANSWERED (vers. 19, 20).

of God. Saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord — This was the reason of the name; and she gave it him, that he, as well as she, might keep in mind that he was solemnly dedicated to the Lord, from whom he had been obtained by

prayer, and that, remembering how God had evidently heard prayer in this instance, they might the more readily and confidently have recourse to him in all trials and troubles, and put their trust in him.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

1:19-28 Elkanah and his family had a journey before them, and a family of children to take with them, yet they would not move till they had worshipped God together. Prayer and provender do not hinder a journey. When men are in such haste to set out upon journeys, or to engage in business, that they have not time to worship God, they are likely to proceed without his presence and blessing. Hannah, though she felt a warm regard for the courts of God's house, begged to stay at home. God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. Those who are detained from public ordinances, by the nursing and tending of little children, may take comfort from this instance, and believe, that if they do that duty in a right spirit, God will graciously accept them therein. Hannah presented her child to the Lord with a grateful acknowledgment of his goodness in answer to prayer. Whatever we give to God, it is what we have first asked and received from him. All our gifts to him were first his gifts to us. The child Samuel early showed true piety. Little children should be taught to worship God when very young. Their parents should teach them in it, bring them to it, and put them on doing it as well as they can; God will graciously accept them, and will teach them to do better.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

A beautiful example of the composing influence of prayer. Hannah had cast her burden upon the Lord, and so her own spirit was relieved of its load. She now returned to the family feast, and ate her portion with a cheerful heart. Acts 2:46-47. The word "sad" is not in the Hebrew text, but it fairly supplies the meaning intended.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

12-18. Eli marked her mouth—The suspicion of the aged priest seems to indicate that the vice of intemperance was neither uncommon nor confined to one sex in those times of disorder. This mistaken impression was immediately removed, and, in the words, "God grant," or rather, "will grant," was followed by an invocation which, as Hannah regarded it in the light of a prophecy pointing to the accomplishment of her earnest desire, dispelled her sadness,

and filled her with confident hope [1Sa 1:18]. The character and services of the expected child were sufficiently important to make his birth a fit subject for prophecy.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about, after Hannah had conceived,.... Or, "at the revolutions of days" (b); at the end of a year, of a complete year, as Ben Melech, from their return from Shiloh; for it might be some time after their return that she conceived; or rather the sense is, that at nine months' end, the usual time of a woman's going with child from her conception, which is the date here given: that she bare a son: was brought to bed of a son: and called his name Samuel, saying, because I have asked him of the Lord; one would think rather his name should have been Saul, for the reason given; but, as Ben Gersom observes, givers of names are not always grammatically strict and critical in them, or in the etymology of them, as in the names of Reuben and Noah, in which he instances; and this may be the rather overlooked in a woman, than in a man of learning. According to Kimchi, it is as if it was Saulmeel; that is, "asked of God", and by contraction Samuel; but Hillerus (c) gives a better account of this name, and takes it to be composed of Saul-mul-el, "asked before God", "in the sight of God", "before the ark of God". This name Hannah gave her son (for sometimes the father, and sometimes the mother, gave the name) in memory of the wonderful favour and goodness of God in granting her request; and to impress her own mind with a sense of the obligation she lay under, to perform her vow, and to engage her son the more readily to give up himself to the service of God, when he reflected on his name, and the reason of it.

- A. Hanna Knew Sorrow. (Vs.1-8) *There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite^[a] from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. ³ 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. ⁴ Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶ Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷ This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. ⁸ 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?"

B. Sorrow comes to all "Gods" children. In some shape and in some form, it does seem like sadness, or tragedy, or genetics or physical attributes, or mistakes, or accidents or circumstances all can drive each and every one of us to have moments of serious despair, sadness, self-esteem that flies out the window, feelings of uselessness, depression, self-loathing and a hundred others examples that oft times we as human beings experience.

C. Hanna of course, was just like you and I. Her sorrow however came in light of the fact that she was well loved, cherished, and yet she could not provide the one thing that in ancient culture seemingly made one whole, respectable and admired in the family and in the community.

1. *In Israel and among oriental peoples generally barrenness was a woman's and a family's greatest misfortune. The highest sanctions of religion and patriotism blessed the fruitful woman, because children were necessary for the perpetuation of the tribe and its religion. It is significant that the mothers of the Hebrew race, Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel, were by nature sterile, and therefore God's special intervention shows His particular favor to Israel. Fruitfulness was God's special blessing to His people (Exodus 23:26; Deuteronomy 7:14; Psalms 113:9). A complete family is an emblem of beauty (Song of Solomon 4:2; 6:6). Metaphorically, Israel, in her days of adversity, when her children were exiled, was barren, but in her restoration she shall rejoice in many children (Isaiah 54:1; Galatians 4:27). The utter despair and terror of the destruction of Jerusalem could go no farther than that the barren should be called blessed (Luke 23:29). T. Rees*

2. On top of her personal feelings of sorrow was the almost unspeakable cruelty of a person who seemingly enjoyed making Hanna feel worse than she already did and loathe herself more than she even need to, to begin with. Woe to the person who builds themselves up by putting another person down. Consider... *her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.* Have you noticed that there are still people around that no matter how you try, no matter how much you give or change, or mature...there they are, criticizing, laughing, spreading gossip, and just being ungodly and ungodlike: You would swear that they were personal accomplices of the Enemy himself; a pitiful, loathsome individual who thrives and relishes the misfortune of others.

D. Often times, when a person like this is in our lives, we can only take stock in the fact that there is "One" person who can sympathize with us, who knows what it means to be ridiculed and made fun of... Christ beckons all

who suffer from constant criticism to “come unto me you that are weary and carry heavy burdens, Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for my burden is light... .Indeed, with Jesus Christ in our corner we have a friend of the friendless, a friend who sticks closer than a brother, a person who knows the pain of selfish critics and gracious less so called friends. No wonder the scriptures describe our great ally, as a man of Sorrows... Well acquainted with Grief. Consider today if you will, that It’s Christ who comes along aside of you and me in our down moments and states empathically; in this world you will have trouble, but do not be dismayed, for I have overcome the world. In fact for you and by you I am your:

El Shaddi (Lord God Almighty)
El Elyon (The Most High God)
Adonai (Lord, Master)
Yahweh (Lord, Jehovah)
Jehovah Nissi (The Lord My Banner)
Jehovah-Raah (The Lord My Shepherd)
Jehovah Rapha (The Lord That Heals)
Jehovah Shammah (The Lord Is There)
Jehovah Tsidkenu (The Lord Our Righteousness)
Jehovah Mekoddishkem (The Lord Who Sanctifies You)
El Olam (The Everlasting God)
Elohim (God)
Qanna (Jealous)
Jehovah Jireh (The Lord Will Provide)
Jehovah Shalom (The Lord Is Peace)
Jehovah Sabaoth (The Lord of Hosts)

Hanna was indeed a person who knew Sorrow... But how she dealt with that sorrow speaks volume concerning her character...and ours.

(Commitment is more than just words)

- A. Hanna Developed Character. (Vs. 9-16) ⁹ *Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD’s house.* ¹⁰ *In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly.* ¹¹ *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.”¹² As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth.¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk¹⁴ and said to her, “How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine.”¹⁵ “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.¹⁶ Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.”

- B. Hanna, like you and I had a choice to how we allow our problems, our sorrows and even others opinions about us, to affect us and ultimately mold us. She had every reason and every right to be bitter, to strike out at others, to somehow let another person share in some of her pain... But, in reality, although she was quite unaware of it, she was too descent a person to do that. (As are many of you this morning) Hers was a silent suffering of the heart... a noble, Godlike characteristic that allowed her to not become bitter, but somehow, through it all to become a better person; less apt to criticize or put down others.... Her sorrow drove her eventually where many of us finally end up, on our knees in prayer, broken and yet, somehow hopeful, dejected, sure... but not completely in despair; hoping with all hearts that God will hear us and perhaps at least be with us... as we come to that place of wondering how much more... how much more Lord?
- C. Unbeknownst to Hanna was the extent of her inner goodness, her hidden quality of holiness, and her righteous heart that allowed her not only to come to God, but because of the rightness and purity of her own heart to somehow arrest God 's attention. Oh yes, Her knees may have been bent, but in that very room, at that very place, the Master was willingly and purposely near... Himself kneeling next to and with her. Perhaps you've been there? Perhaps you are there today. Brother and sister know that the God who comforted Hanna, is willing and wanting to comfort you...
- D. As Hanna found, her character enabled her to enter in and entreat the God she earnestly sought. Perhaps she would say to you and me in hindsight, all of life is about character building. My character was formed in the fire of sorrow and burden, but God, in His time, and in His way, took my burdens and gave me blessings, saw my sorrow, shared my

sorrow and eventually shaped me into the person I am today. Hanna Know Sorrow, Hanna Developed character...

(Commitment is more than just words)

- A. Hanna Kept her Word. Why? She had through it all, become a person of integrity (Vs.17-20) ¹⁷ *Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."* ¹⁸ *She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.* ¹⁹ *Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her.* ²⁰ *So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel,^[b] saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."*
- B. A little know fact about Hanna is: *Hannah had 5 more children after Samuel. God didn't just honor Eli's blessing the first time. God continued to answer the prayers for Hannah. She had three more sons and two daughters while Samuel "grew up in the presence of the Lord"*
- C. There is something about keeping your word, being a wise person of integrity, remembering your vows, following through on the promises you make to God. Commitment **IS** more than just words—it's a lifelong process of doing what you have say-- do we do it perfectly, Hardly... but our holy conscience and our righteous heart will always remind us of who and whose we are and the promises that we need to keep. Ephesians 3: 20 states ²⁰ *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us...Hanna understood the wonder and grandeur of God... how about you...?*
- D. Some examples... (Commitment is more than just words)