

There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. ² He had two wives. The name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

³ Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the Lord. ⁴ On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb.^[a] ⁶ And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. ⁷ So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. ⁸ And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

⁹ After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. ¹⁰ She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. ¹¹ And she vowed a vow and said, "O 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, and no razor shall touch his head."

¹² As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. ¹⁴ And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." ¹⁵ But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. ¹⁶ Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." ¹⁷ Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." ¹⁸ And she said, "Let your servant find favour in your eyes." Then the woman went on her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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."^[b]

Long term struggles

God caused (v.5-6)

- not all things are God caused
- some things might be
- this isn't something because of personal sin
- not all answers are evident
- Barren Woman
- Unemployment
- Being born into a broken family

Persistent Faithfulness (v.7)

- no disavowal of God
- no renunciation of her faith
- persistent prayer, yes, but greater is her persistent turning to God
- who else can she turn to?
- year after year

Prayer isn't about forcing God's hand, as much as it's about God's hand shaping us

- A dilemma not solved by man's solutions
- Look at it a different way, it's okay,
 - it's good advice, true thoughts, good stuff
 - but it can't change the heart can it?
- As pastor, this is one of the most difficult challenges I have
 - we might give advice that is wise, but we also know that we have very little ability to change someone's heart. If something is deep into their heart, no amount of reasoning can shift it.
 - but prayer, prayer does something different. Well actually not prayer, but God – God does something different. When we engage with God, we are granting him access to the deeper part of our lives

Thinking back to the tabernacle we have this amazing life size invitation from God to understand his heart – and for the high priests, to enter into that place. It's a picture of God's great desire and love for us – and for us to know his heart, and fellowship with Him.

But like the Israelites at that time, they didn't enter into the presence of God, but kept their hearts fearful on the outside.

But when Christ came, things changed. It was an invitation for us to personally and corporately to share and know the heart of Christ, and for our hearts to be known by Him. To have our understanding of relationships and intimacy shaped by Him.

The Turning of a heart produces a different response

Surrender.

This isn't about me anymore, this is about you God.

What you give me, I'll give up.

God don't heal me for my glory, but heal me for yours.

God don't give me a child for my glory, but for yours.

God don't grant me a job for my glory, but for yours.

1. A promise? A surrender.

But this is a deep deep promise. Surely she's thought about praying this before right? God give me this, let me barter, make an exchange with God?

And then when the priest comes by and tells her how long will you keep being drunk, she says, i'm troubled in spirit, not drunk but pouring out my soul before the Lord.

2. Drunk? Clear.

And after that moment, she comes into a moment of clarity. She's not drunk. And perhaps for the first time in years she's clear. In pouring out her soul before the Lord, she's given it all up.

3. Life given.

v18. Then the woman went on her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

Epilogue

A greater time. A greater blessing. A greater purpose.

A son, she brings him to the temple.

21 The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. 22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there for ever." 23 Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the Lord establish his word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. 24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. And the child was young. 25 Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. 26 And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord. 27 For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. 28 Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord."

The beauty of this.

God uses Samuel as his anointed prophet to bring about major reforms into a broken kingdom. It's the arrival of Samuel that helps usher in a spiritual reformation into the broken worship of God actually. And eventually usher in the time of the Kings.

But we would see that these earthly kings would still fall short.
We needed an eternal king. Someone that could also be our spiritual leader.
Jesus.

And for us, there's also another epilogue.
To turn our eyes from earthly realities for a moment and to yearn for something greater.
God, transform our offerings to you into spiritual blessings.
Hannah yearns for an earthly child, her own son, to raise, to teach, to care for, to love. But in her surrendering to God, God transform her son into a spiritual child. He becomes Samuel, the prophet of the kings.

Surrender to God and let him transform them.
Surrender means a willingness to let him take away, or to give.
Surrender means saying God, your glory, your will, your name, your life.

It doesn't just mean giving up.
It means putting it onto God's side.