**Hannah keeps her promise**

1 Samuel 1:21-2:11 (Key verse 27-28a)

**I** prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted **me** what **I** asked of him. So now **I** give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD. And he worshiped the LORD there. (27-28a)

Last week we learned about Hannah’s vowing prayer which was her spiritual fruit. Her vowing prayer was, *“…O LORD almighty, if you will only look upon 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.”* However her true greatness is shown when she kept her vow to God. We human beings can be ever forgetful of God’s grace. After we obtain God’s blessings we easily become proud and indifferent to God. However to our amazement as we shall see through today’s message, Hannah kept her vow to God by dedicating Samuel to God? How can we too replicate Hannah’s faith? May God raise up many among us men and women of prayer like Hannah who can fully surrender their best to God.

Let me recap a bit on how the boy child Samuel was conceived and to further build the first case of how Hannah could keep her promise. Verse 19-20 reads, “…Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, Saying because I asked the LORD for him.” When it says the Lord remembered Hannah, it actually means that the Lord remembered both Hannah’s vow and prayer request. Hannah’s was conscious of this and named the son Samuel, whereby Samuel means, “God heard”. So just from the sons name we can see that Hannah was already expressing her thanksgiving to God. Whenever she would call Samuel or play with Samuel she would remember her vowing prayer and that God heard both her vow and her prayer. Not only her prayer to have a son, but both her vow and prayer. This is very important for Hannah to keep her promise, that God heard both her prayer and vow. Meaning that if God could take serious her prayer, God also took serious her vow. God answering her prayer was God also answering her vow.

Now the question is, how was Hannah going to keep her promise or hand over the child for full dedication to the Lord as per her vow? In verse 21, we read that during the time for the annual family visit to the temple for the annual sacrifice to the Lord Hannah did not go. Look at verse 22-23, “Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, “After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there always. 23 “Do what seems best to you,” her husband Elkanah told her. “Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the Lord make good his word.” So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.” It was common in Israel for a mother to nurse a child until the age of three. The weaning process is to allow the child from drinking from mother’s milk to being able to eat solid food. Dedicating her son to God did not mean that she did not care and love the young Samuel. Hannah must have also devoted herself to teaching young Samuel the ways of the Lord. Hannah’s devotion to weaning Samuel was not about fulfilling her deepest needs through her child or making Samuel the center of the universe. It was about fulfilling her oath to God. It was about being faithful to her calling to be a godly mother.

Now after the weaning period had ended, what did Hannah do? Look at verse 24-26, “After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. 25 When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, 26 and she said to him, “Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord.” Hannah brought the child to the temple and kept her vow. How could Hannah do this? Having kept the child for three years was risky, what if she grew more attached to keeping her son? When young Samuel started growing and looking all cute and beautiful, she could have changed her mind? When her bond and connection to Samuel started growing in those three years, how could she let go? This was the first fruit of her womb, her very best after a long time of barrenness, how could Hannah keep her promise to dedicate Samuel to God? What would other people say? Humanly speaking there was nothing wrong in keeping her child, it was her God given gift to have a child, it is her right to have that child to herself, she is a mother after all. Would she not look like a careless woman who gave up her three year old child? The bond between mother and child is very strong. What kept Hannah so resolute and firm in keeping her promise amidst all these temptations? **Let us all read verse 27-28, “I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. 28 So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord.” And he worshiped the Lord there.”** Hannah could keep her promise, because firstly she prayed, let us look at the meaning of **“I prayed for this child and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him”.** Hannah prayed and so she could experience God personally. Let us recap a bit and look at Hannah’s prayer in verse 13-18, “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 favour in your eyes.” Then she went her way and ate something, **and her face was no longer downcast.** Her outpouring of her soul to God looked as though she was drunk. She was grieved and in great anguish for a son. However when she left the temple, she left in peace, her face was no longer downcast. How was this possible because her situation had not changed? It was because when she prayed and presented her requests to God, God granted her His peace. And what do we know about God’s peace? In Philippians 4:7 reads, **“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** God’s peace transcends all understanding, she was still in her current situation, with no clue on how her womb would be opened, with her enemy Peninnah pestering and making her feel less of a woman. Yet when she received the peace that comes from God through prayer, her face was no longer downcast. This is so remarkable. It was as though Hannah had received Samuel by faith even before her womb was opened. Right here Hannah experienced God personally because God granted her His peace as though God was saying, trust me all is well. So Hannah, received two things from God, God’s peace and later on God opened her womb. But I believe the best thing was God’s peace.

Hannah said, “I prayed for this child”, yes, Elkanah could have supported in prayer, family and friends could have supported in prayer. But more importantly, she herself prayed and the Lord answered her prayer. She could personally experience God’s peace and later on the removal of her Barrenness. Hannah understood that it was God who closed her womb, and now through her prayer God opened her womb. She recognizes that the Lord heard her deepest need and that the Lord responded to her need. This reminds me of my situation I had. I once also prayed and made a vow, however when the time came to honour my vow, I got cold feet. I did not do my part and surrender my will. I could not keep my promise to the Lord. When I look at Hannah and my situation, I realize that Hannah had a solid peace even before her situation changed and I can now see the importance of God’s peace.

Secondly, when Hannah said, **“I prayed for this child and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him”** She recognizes that God granted her exactly what she prayed for**.** God granted her exactly what she prayed for. Hannah recognizes that, she did not pray for any other child, but that she prayed for this child. She prayed for a son and the Lord granted her the exact child she prayed for. There was no coincidences or confusion, it was all clear and solid, she received exactly what she prayed for. I think that is why it is important to be very clear with our prayer topics. In order that we would know with certainty that it is the Lord who has answered. However even though sometimes it can be so clear that the Lord has answered our prayer and we end up struggling or being rebellious to surrender our will to the will of God.

Thirdly, Hannah could keep her promise because she had already firmly dedicated Samuel from the time of pregnancy. Why do I say that? Look at verse 28a, “So now I give him to the Lord” the NIV version does not do this verse justice, in the King James (KJV) it reads, “Therefore **also** I have lent him to the Lord” or the American Standard Version(ASV) “therefore also I have granted him to Jehovah” though she is now giving the young Samuel to the Lord now, from the KJV/ASV we can actually see that from the time her prayer was answered, she **also** dedicated Samuel to the Lord. That the meaning of **also** there, Indicates that, as the lord answered my prayer, I **also** have dedicated Samuel to the Lord. This means that while she was weaning the young Samuel she was not still busy deciding whether to dedicate young Samuel to the Lord or not. Her heart was clear and solid, just as God had answered her prayer, it also meant that Samuel belonged to God.

All this shows that Hannah experienced God personally, she experienced God’s peace which meant that she trusted God, she could experience the holiness of God and she could have the fear of the Lord to keep her promise. She knew without a doubt that God was with her. She could humble herself and keep her promise to the living God. Hannah could realize personally that life and death come from God. By keeping her promise what was Hannah really doing? Hannah honoured God by honouring her vow to God. Hannah, trusted God’s hand to protect the boy and to lead him in the way he should go. She could offer up her son to God because she loved God more than she loved her son. When we are personal with God and love God more than we love God’s blessings we can offer anything back to God to serve His purpose in our lives, our children’s lives or anything else that the Lord may need in his work. More importantly we should keep our promise to dedicate our lives to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what was the result of her keeping her promise? Chapter 2:1-11 reveals how after Hannah kept her promise she was filled with thanksgiving, joy and praise to the Lord. Her vowing prayer reveals how her dedication to keep her promise matured her. Chapter 2 verse 1 reads, “Then Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.” Though she had just given her one and only son, to the Lord, she was not filled with sadness but praise. Because she kept her promise, Hannah could gain a deeper satisfaction in the Lord. Her faith and maturity In the Lord grew remarkably. As much as we study, pray and come for worship, we can learn from Hannah, that in order to grow spiritually it through keeping our promise to God, it is through obeying God’s word. And then the Lord will reveal himself to us as He did to Hannah in Chapter 2:1-10.

Hannah became a mother through faith, all her natural attempts and human confidence/strength failed. It was only by a vowing prayer that she could become a mother. When Hannah realized that her victory came from God and not from her human abilities she could keep her promise. What was the effect of Hannah keeping her promise to the Lord on Samuel? We shall see how Samuel grew as we move along the book of Samuel in our Sunday services, however just to give some snippets. In verse 11 we read that, the young Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli the priest. In Chp 2:18,”But Samuel ministered before the Lord….” In verse 26, “And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with people.” Chp 3:19, “The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground.” in summary Samuel grew to become a great prophet and judge for the people of Israel. Through him King Saul and later on king David were chosen for the people of Israel. Remembering that the young Samuel grew in a corrupt and spiritually depraved time even at the temple. Yet because of Hannah’s decision of faith to keep her promise, Samuel from his young age could be used greatly by God. Hannah also lived in a very competitive environment with Peninnah the other wife to her husband Elkanah, however because of her vowing prayer and keeping her promise she not only could affect her environment, but through her son Samuel the whole nation of Israel could be blessed. And today we too and many other nations will be blessed by the faith and life of Hannah.

In conclusion, God used Hannah’s prayer to bring about one of the great prophets called Samuel into the History of world salvation. It was while Israel was in a dark time, yet when Hannah prayed and kept her promise by offering young Samuel to the Lord, there was hope for the deliverance of Israel. God also offered his one and only Son Jesus Christ for our Salvation. Today because of Jesus we can have hope in the kingdom of God. This is God’s revealed personal grace and love for us. I pray we may experience Jesus more personally so that we too may be used by God as Hannah was. May God raise such people of prayer such as Hannah among us, for the raising of Jesus’ disciples and young leaders for our generation. Amen.