

Hannah- A Praiseworthy Parent.

"And Hannah Prayed." 1 Samuel 2:1.

*omit* { There may be someone here today named Hannah, or Anna, or Grace. Hannah in the Hebrew language is the same as Anna in the Greek, and means "grace." A favorite name among Korean Christians is "Unhay", meaning "grace." }

*the prophet*  
Hannah, the mother of Samuel, ~~that praiseworthy parent about whom we are thinking today~~, had to live in a home blighted by the terrible sin of polygamy. She was one of two wives of Elkanah. She also experienced an exceptional providence. The other wife, Penninah, had children, but Hannah had no children. It can be easily understood how this situation in the home led to provocation. Hannah's rival "provoked her sore, to make her fret." The Chinese character for "trouble" is quite suggestive, - two women under one roof. It is no wonder that poor Hannah wept and and lost her appetite. But Hannah did not grieve herself to death. Being a true believer she took her trouble to the Lord in prayer.

1. Hannah Praying.

Although in bitterness of soul, instead of becoming permanently embittered, and estranged from God, she "prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore". She carried it all to the Lord in prayer. "Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer; In His arms He'll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there."

In her affliction and distress Hannah made a vow in which she told the Lord that if He would give her a man-child she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life, she would completely dedicate her child to the Lord, and separate him from the world. Many of us parents when we dedicated our children to the Lord in the ordinance of infant baptism, took a vow like this in the presence of God and the congregation: "Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to set before(him) a godly example, that you will pray with and for him, that you will teach (him) the doctrines of our holy religion, and that you will strive by all the means of God's appointment, to bring (him) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" Do you?

After the vow Hannah did not cease to pray, but continued praying before the Lord. Jesus taught that we should always pray and not faint. Paul said to the Thessalonian church, "Pray without ceasing."

Hannah did not merely say her prayers with ~~her~~ lips. Hers was heart praying. "She spake in her heart." When the priest, Eli, saw only her lips moving and did not hear any words, he misunderstood, and thought she was drunk. On the other hand she was only praying the kind of prayer especially pleasing unto the Lord, a prayer from the heart. She replied to the priest, "I poured out my soul before the Lord." This was in the spirit of the Psalmist who said, "Trust in him at all times, ye people; Pour out your soul before him: God is a refuge for us."

Hannah's was evidently a prayer of faith. After she had poured out her soul before the Lord, and had received the blessing of the priest "she went her way and did eat; and her countenance was no more sad." She believed that God would hear and answer her prayer. She now had hope. The apostle Paul said to the Romans: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit."

Then the record tells us that Hannah joined with her husband in early morning worship. "And they rose up in the morning early,

and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah."

It is not surprising to read further that God worked in answer to the fervent prayer of this righteous woman. Just as He had visited Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and gave her a son, Isaac; and just as He remembered Rachel, and gave her a son, Joseph; so the Lord remembered her; "and it came to pass, when the time was come about, that Hannah conceived, and bare a son." Immediately this mother recognized answered prayer in the very naming of the baby. "And she called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord."

As the scene moves on we see the mother tarrying at home in Ramah caring for the little baby while the others go up to Shiloh. She is determined to nurture that little child properly in the home. And when she had weaned him she took him personally to the priest and to the temple and they presented him to the Lord to serve him all the days of his life. "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have granted him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he is granted to the Lord."

Now comes the evidence of the definite fruit of the prayers and consecration of this mother. A few words closing the chapter tell the whole story. "And he worshipped the Lord there." The child is saved, dedicated to the Lord, and worshipping Him personally. It is no wonder that Hannah's praying turns into praising.

## 2. Hannah Praising.

Hannah's song of thanksgiving which now follows in ~~chapter two~~ is one of the great pieces of Hebrew poetry, and in many ways foreshadows the Song of Mary at the time of the birth of Jesus. A chief thing to observe about this song of Hannah is that its ~~thought~~ centers not upon the gift but upon the giver. What a lesson there is here especially for all new parents! Hannah does not go into ecstasies as to what a beautiful baby little Samuel is, and that there was never another baby like him. Rather she glories in the great God and Savior who had given her the child, unworthy though she<sup>was</sup>, to be so honored of God.

She rejoices in the salvation, the holiness, the strength, the knowledge, the power, the goodness, and the justice of the Lord. Then as she reaches the highest note in this song of thanksgiving, the Spirit of God gives her a glimpse of Messiah, the King. The last words in her song are these: "And he will give strength unto his king, And exalt the horn of his anointed." Here we find in the Old Testament the first designation of the Messiah—His anointed—under that name. This is the word that Simon Peter heard from the lips of his brother, Andrew, as he said unto him, "We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ), And he brought him to Jesus."

When that little baby comes into the home, while<sup>you</sup> thankful for the precious gift, think most of the gracious Giver, and of Christ the King, who came into the world as a little child. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." "And thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High—and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

## 3. Hannah's Practical Piety.

Lest we think that Hannah in her life of praying and praising was not a practical mother, let us look again at her as a mother of practical piety, particularly in two respects:

First, <sup>on the other hand</sup> her faithful care of the child at home. The time the mother spends at home caring for the little child is not lost time, but some of the best time that can be spent in the world. Someone has said that the wages paid a mother as she cares for her<sup>child</sup>

child is the highest paid in the world. Evidently during those first few years of Samuel's life, yes, even before he was weaned, he had been taught by his mother to worship God. For after he had been taken to the temple and presented to the Lord, those significant words are added- "And he (that is, little Samuel)-"worshipped the Lord there."

In his "Talks on Soul-Winning" Dr. E.Y. Mullins, of sainted memory, closes his chapter on "Winning the Children" with the following paragraph:

"I cannot better close this chapter than by referring to a poem of Robert Browning, which portrays an angel who seems to be chained to a spot close to a tomb. The heavens above are opening, and hands beckon to the angel to come above; and out yonder in the distance great enterprises are in motion, calling to the angel to come and take part in them. But the angel is bending over some object at the tomb, and upon looking closer you discover that the task which holds the angel is this: He is teaching a little child to pray. The child with uplifted hands and bowed face is being instructed in the great duty of prayer. This task, to the angel who knows eternal things, is greater than any earthly enterprise, and even greater than entering the open heavens above."

In striking contrast to this picture of teaching a little child to pray to the true and living God, is what I actually saw <sup>many years ago</sup> at the Snake Temple in the city of Penang, on the Malay Peninsula. Our boat being in that port for only a short time, we wanted to have a sight-see of what might be of special interest. We were informed that such a place was the Snake Temple, so we went to see this strange and terrible sight. As we approached the temple building we were joined by crowds of Chinese people who were entering the building with us, not for a sight-see as we were, but for worship. As we walked along with the crowds I noticed one nicely dressed Chinese woman, who was leading along with her a good-looking little child, taking him into the temple, ~~there teaching her little boy to pray to the snakes!~~ As we entered the building we saw all across the front side a big altar, and there were big live snakes, enormous snakes drowsily lying and slowly moving about on this altar, while the poor people were bowing down and praying to these snakes. And that bright little boy was being taught by his mother to pray to the snakes! With us were our three little children, who, due solely to the grace of Almighty God, had ~~known~~ from infancy known and loved Jesus, and had been taught to pray in His name to our Father in heaven. Our three children now all grown, are rejoicing in His service. But what has become of that little Chinese boy in far away Malaya whose mother was teaching him to pray to the snakes?

Not only was Hannah faithful in the care and training of her child at home, but she <sup>also</sup> maintained her interest in him after he left home. One of the finest indications of a mother's continued devotion, and I am sure, too, her continued prayers for her child is recorded of Hannah in First Samuel, chapter two. The little boy is now serving the Lord in the temple at Shiloh. The record continues as follows: "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little robe, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice." <sup>in heaven</sup> She continued to maintain the tie. Not only <sup>in heaven</sup> prayers continually ascending to the throne, but also packages from home <sup>in heaven</sup> regularly received by the boy. How much each ~~one~~ tells of the love and devotion of the mother!

If we had more praying Hannahs today we would have more consecrated Samuels, ready to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." We would have more ministers for our pulpits, more missionaries to go to the ends of the earth, more Christian leaders, and more Christian followers.

In Buffalo Springs cemetery, overlooking a quiet little town in Central Kentucky, is the grave of an humble Christian mother, among whose children and grandchildren there are a number of ministers and missionaries. At her funeral many years ago the officiating minister read an appropriate passage of Scripture, from which I make a few quotations:

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"A worthy woman who can find? For her price is far above rubies."

"She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."

"She looketh well to the ways of her household, And eateth not the bread of idleness."

"Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; But a woman that fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; And let her works praise her in the gates."

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