

1 Samuel Chapter 2

by Charles E. Wigg

HANNAH'S SECOND PRAYER AT THE TABERNACLE

Hannah's second prayer is recorded for us, and it has stirred the hearts of the godly down through the ages, and even formed part of Mary's prayer called the Magnificat, recorded in Luke 1:45-55. It is interesting to note how that godly sisters have contributed richly to the hymnology of the Church down through the ages. The New Testament clearly forbids the public participation of women in teaching, preaching, and even in speaking in tongues in the Church. Yet they have contributed richly and rightly with hymns etc. Hannah's composition is a very rich one, and it reveals the spiritual depth of her soul. Some of the rich expressions that she used later found their way into Psalms etc. Though she had been tormented and provoked by her rival, yet God had taken account of her sincerity, her reproach is now removed. She expresses her appreciation for this and issues a gracious warning to her rival, and to any that would follow Peninnah's example. Pride arrogance and presumption are all hateful to God He weighs actions, and knows the motives that lie behind our words and actions. It is interesting that we never read of Peninnah or her children again. Her children are not named, neither are they to be found in the family tree recorded in 1Chronicles 6, whereas God has recorded the whole of Samuel's life and ministry for us, and his name is given to two books in the Bible. There is great encouragement to be found here in her words, by those that are put down, or written off by others. There are words of warning for those that proudly boast of their seeming successes.

God's ways are past finding out, He kills and brings down to the grave, and then shows His mighty power in resurrection. It is all His work, so the glory must all be His! He has ordained that no flesh shall glory in His sight. Though He must have all the glory, (and rightly so), yet He does not deny us the joy that comes from witnessing His working. 1 Corinthians 1:29-31. Those that have been through such a humbling process, (as mentioned here), must thereafter be wholly dependant upon God, for His gracious keeping power. "He keepeth the feet of His saints, thus those that have accepted the cross of Christ as their own, and who have been buried with Him by baptism unto death, they then share in His resurrection. Such can count on His keeping power, as they seek in His strength, to live a holy life, for His pleasure. "The wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength, (their own), shall no man prevail". This wickedness, and those that are described as the adversaries of God, were to be found in unusual places, and the wicked sons of Eli, though clothed with priestly garments, and officiating in the capacity of priests, were numbered amongst those just mentioned. It may seem that their wickedness is not noticed by God, but nothing escapes His Holy eyes. In his time His judgment will fall on the unrepentant.

He will see to it that His King, (our Lord Jesus Christ), is ultimately exalted. His power will finally be shown.

SAMUEL'S MINISTRY BEGINS

When Elkanah and Hannah went to their home, Samuel was left at Shiloh. At a tender age he donned the clothing of a priest, and he ministered unto the Lord, before Eli the priest. He is thereby contrasted with the sons of Eli, because though they occupied the public place of being priests, yet they ministered to themselves, they gratified their own sinful lusts. They used their position to make themselves rich and fat. They "knew not the Lord", they were "sons of Belial", (worthless fellows), yet they occupied such a place. They were greedy, grasping, violent men. God had provided in His Law, for the priests to be maintained by the freewill offerings of the people of God. They were to receive the wave breast, and the right shoulder of every peace offering, as well as the most of the oblation that was offered with it. But this was not enough for them, they put themselves first, they demanded that they be given their portion first, even before the fat was burned on the altar. (Even before God had received His portion). Though the people were in a backslidden state, yet some realised that such conduct was not right, but their objections were overcome with the threat of violence. We are told that "the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord," and that they caused men to abhor the offering of the Lord. We see a similar thing today

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when wicked men are able to occupy the place of being 'Great Faith Preachers'. They preach the 'Prosperity Gospel', and are able to dupe ignorant and carnal people, (some of whom are believers), into giving them huge amounts of money. They become millionaires, and use the 'service of God' as a means of making themselves very rich. They will finally bring down the judgment of God on themselves, as the sons of Eli did.

FAITHFUL AMIDST UNFAITHFULNESS

Little Samuel grew up amidst such evil, yet he was not tainted by it. In fact his witnessing of these vile practices gave him a hatred of such evil which remained with him all his days. Chapter 12:3. No doubt his mother's prayers played a big part in his preservation in such an environment. This should be an encouragement to all godly mothers to pray for their children constantly. While they remain in the home, they are, (or should be), sheltered from all evil influence. Sadly sometimes it is not so, as in these modern days careless mothers often allow the T.V to take over their role of caring for the children and instructing them daily in the things of God. It is no wonder then, that in Western society we have a generation that will not accept discipline, and no longer want to attend meetings, unless they can be entertained there by worldly things.

The Levite was not to begin his service until reaching the age of 25 years, and they were to retire at the age of 55 years. But Samuel began his service as a priest at a very early age, and continued his service until death. He had been dedicated to the service of Jehovah all the days of his life, "as long as he lived". This is an example that we also should follow, and we should dedicate the lives of our children to the Lord and His service from the time that they are born.

A PILGRIMAGE WITH A DIFFERENCE

Though Shiloh was only seven miles (or at the most twelve miles), from Ramah; yet we do not read of Hannah visiting her son more than once a year. This visit took place at the time of Elkanah's annual pilgrimage. But each year that she went, Hannah took with her a little coat that she had probably made herself, for her little priest-son. Properly speaking, Samuel should never have been a priest, as he was not of the family of Aaron, but was a Kohathite-Levite by birth. Though the Levites assisted the priests in the slaughter, and the preparation of the sacrificial animals, yet they normally had no part in presenting the offerings to God. But the nation of Israel were far away from God, and many things were being practiced that the Law either did not command, or even permit. However Samuel ministered before the Lord, just a boy clothed in a linen ephod. He was not tainted by the horrible evil that was present there at Shiloh. Great joy and expectation now must have filled Hannah's heart as she made preparation for the annual pilgrimage. She would have expected that Samuel had grown somewhat during the past year, so that each time she went up, the coat that she took with her would have been a bit larger. But this little boy did not only grow in the sight of men, but 'before the Lord', he grew spiritually, though as yet he had not come to know the Lord personally.

The purity and simplicity of the life of this little boy spoke to the heart of Eli also. He saw in Samuel what he could not find in his own sons. He heard the reports of all that his wicked sons were doing, but he did not have the courage or the desire to use the Law against his own flesh and blood. However he did rebuke them, but only very mildly. He challenged them with the words, "Why do you do such things?" He told them of the evil reports he had heard, and warned them of what the consequences for them would be. But his words of rebuke had no power, perhaps it was because he had not set them a good example in his own way of life? However nothing had escaped the eye of the Holy God, that they were supposed to hallow, and to represent. Eli would take no action to discipline them, or to fulfil the tenets of the Law he was supposed to administer. But God was about to intervene directly to punish those wicked men that had

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sinned so glaringly, He would slay them. The godly example of little Samuel was seen by all, and the contrast of his life with that of those that occupied the place of priests, won the hearts of the people that knew and observed him. He grew on and was in favour with the Lord and with men. Similar words are said about the Lord Jesus. That "He increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man. Luke 2:52. It doubtless brought joy to the heart of God, to see in Samuel what would later be seen in fullness and perfection in the Lord Jesus.

HANNAH'S REWARD

Hannah had given up to God the dearest object of her affections, but she would have her reward. No one ever gives up anything to God but that they receive an abundant reward. He is no man's debtor, though none can ever give to Him anything that does not first come from Him. Later king David stated this in his lovely prayer of offering and worship. 1 Chronicles 29:14-17.

Hannah was visited by God, and she bore another five children, though we are not told that she prayed that God would give her any of them. Thus her cup of joy was full, as she nursed child after child. She is a wonderful example to us all. Let us not hesitate to give up to God whatever he may be pleased to give us. Hannah's reward was double, because in addition to the babies that she bore, she had the double joy of seeing Samuel grow, and ultimately she would live to see him mightily used of God.

THE UN- NAMED MAN OF GOD

Though the state of Israel as a nation was so terrible, yet God still had those on whom He could call in this situation. Who he was, and where he came from we are not told, but he was available to God to deliver His solemn message to Eli. Without fear he delivered that solemn message of judgment to the old priest. In the message God drew Eli's attention to His own sovereign gracious choice. How that He chose Aaron and his descendants to wear the priestly ephod, to serve Him as priest, and his descendants to burn incense before God. God had given to that family such great privilege and honour, even giving them the honour of being supported by the freewill offerings of His people. Yet Eli and his sons had kicked against (despised), God's offerings. They had abused their position of great privilege for their own material gain. They had ignored the rights of God, and the Tabernacle was still His house, the Law was still His commandment, they were still responsible to obey, to act with reverence. But they had not done so, and had done things that God's Law condemned. By their actions they had made God's offerings contemptible in the eyes of the people. Eli had honoured his sons above God, and the patience of God had now been tried to the limit, He would maintain His rights, He would execute judgment on those that despised His holy name. He would honour them that honoured Him, and those that despised Him would be lightly esteemed. The family of Aaron was now divided into several houses, and the house that Eli came from would be set aside, and ultimately destroyed, and the priesthood would be exercised by another house of the descendants of Aaron. It all began with the slaughter of Eli's two sons in one day, but it was not consummated until King Saul slew the priests of Nob about 80 years later.

GOD IS FAITHFUL

We are told in Galatians 6:7-8, that God is not mocked. It is His unchanging Law, that men will reap what they sow. If they sow to the flesh, (as Eli and his sons had done), then they will reap corruption from the flesh. God is ever faithful to His holy word. Whether it be the promise of reward or of judgment.

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God said that He would raise up for Himself a faithful priest, and Eli's descendants would be reduced to begging. They would come cringing and ask to be put into one of the priests offices so that they might have something to eat. He would see to it that those that served Him in this favoured office would honour Him, and do according to what was in the mind of God. What was in His mind was written in His Law.

The man of God, faithfully and fearlessly delivered the message with which he had been entrusted, then disappeared from view, and we never read of him again. But God set about to begin to fulfil the message sent, the warning given, and the one that He would use to bring that nation back to Himself, would be that little boy that served Him faithfully though surrounded by such evil.