Hannah, the Faithful Supplicant

1 Samuel 1:9-20, 25
SS Lesson for 06/14/2026

Devotional Scriptures: 1 Peter 1:3-7

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Key Verse: 1 Sam 1:20

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

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  - Downcast but full of hope (Ps 42:5-6)
  - Downcast but calling on One who is higher (Ps 61:1-2)
  - Downcast but calling on our refuge and portion (Ps 142:2-5)
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- *Concern about drunkenness (14-16)*
  - Concern because the wickedness of drunkenness (Prov 23:29-35)
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  - Answered prayers because God promises to answer even before speaking (Isa 65:24)
  - Answered prayers because God promises it for those who ask and seek (Matt 7:7-8)
  - Answered prayers because of obedience (1 John 3:21-22)
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- *Provision of child (20, 25)*
  - Children are a reward from God (Ps 127:3-5)
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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The events of today's text occurred late in the period of the Judges, perhaps around 1100 BC. In 1 Samuel 1:1-8, Elkanah is introduced with two wives: Peninnah and Hannah. Elkanah may have been an important individual of the priestly Levitical tribe (1 Chronicles 6:23). Although Elkanah loved Hannah very much, she was unable to bear children (1 Samuel 1:8). Peninnah mocked Hannah, perhaps jealous that Elkanah gave her a greater share of their family's annual sacrifice (1:5-6). Even though Hannah was childless, Elkanah gave her a "double portion," the amount typically given to a firstborn son and heir (1:5; see Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Scripture often frames the ability to conceive children as a capacity under the sole discretion of God (Genesis 29:31; 30:22; 1 Samuel 1:6). This is a perfectly reasonable perspective in an age before medical interventions. Just like the fertility of crops and the success of a harvest, the blessing of bearing children was attributed to God (Psalm 127:3-5). But this left many ancient women in a difficult social position. The anxiety and sorrow of infertility became a special place of God's intervention, often signaling the coming of a remarkable child: Isaac (Genesis 21:1-2); Jacob and Esau (25:21); Joseph (30:23-24); Samson (Judges 13:2-3); and, even later, John the Baptist (Luke 1:13, 24-25). As we examine Hannah's story, we see God's attention turned toward her. The child of her penitent prayers will be a leader for a leaderless generation.

Key Verse: 1 Sam 1:20

> *20 So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked for him from the Lord."*

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Hannah's Grief and Faithful Vow (1 Sam 1:9-11)

9 So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the Lord.
10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish.
11 Then she made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

Grief because of downcast soul (9-10)

Downcast because of being childless, but full of faith (Rom 4:18-21)

> 18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead — since he was about a hundred years old — and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,

Downcast but full of hope (Ps 42:5-6)

> 5 Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and 6 my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon — from Mount Mizar.

Downcast but calling on One who is higher (Ps 61:1-2)

1 Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. 2 From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

Downcast but calling on our refuge and portion (Ps 142:2-5)

2 I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble. 3 When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know my way. In the path where I walk men have hidden a snare for me. 4 Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life. 5 I cry to you, O Lord; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."

Downcast but knowing that even Jesus got overwhelmed with sorrow (Mark 14:33-34)

33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

Downcast but trusting in God (Ps 56:3)

3 When I am afraid, I will trust in you.

Vow of dedication to God (11)

Vow that must be kept (Eccles 5:4)

4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow.

Vow that God requires fulfillment (Deut 23:21)

21 If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin.

Vow that must be obeyed even when it hurts (Ps 15:2-4)

2 He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart 3 and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, 4 who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts,

Vow that is not rashly given (Prov 20:25)

25 It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.

Vow that must not be broken (Num 30:1-2)

1 Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the Lord commands: 2 When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

Eli's Concern and Faithful Blessing (1 Sam 1:12-18)

12 And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth.
13 Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk.
14 So Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!"
15 But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord.
16 Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now."
17 Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him."
18 And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

Concern about ineffective prayer (12-13)

Ineffective because of being filled with pride (Luke 18:10-14)

10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Ineffective because of doing to be seen and heard by others (Luke 20:47)

47 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

Ineffective because of thinking we know how to pray (Rom 8:26)

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Ineffective because of broken relationships (1 Peter 3:7)

7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Ineffective because of disobedience (Prov 28:9)

9 If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable.

Concern about drunkenness (14-16)

Concern because the wickedness of drunkenness (Prov 23:29-35)

29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? 30 Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. 31 Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! 32 In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. 33 Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things. 34 You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. 35 "They hit me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt! They beat me, but I don't feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?"

Concern because it inhabits being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18)

18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Concern because drunkenness causes poor judgment (Prov 23:20-21)

20 Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, 21 for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.

Concern because not all who seem to be drunk are not drunk (Acts 2:15)

15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

Blessing of answered prayer (17-18)

Answered prayers because God's eyes are on the righteous (Ps 34:15)

15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry;

Answered prayers because God promises to answer even before speaking (Isa 65:24)

24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

Answered prayers because God promises it for those who ask and seek (Matt 7:7-8)

> 7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Answered prayers because of obedience (1 John 3:21-22)

> 21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

Answered prayer through being righteous (James 5:16-18)

> 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. 17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

God's Faithful Provision (1 Sam 1:19-20, 25)

19 Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her.
20 So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked for him from the Lord."
25 Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli.

Provision of remembrance (19)

God remembers those who fear Him (Eccl 8:12)

> 12 Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God.

God remembers the suffering of His saints (Ps 56:8)

> 8 Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll — are they not in your record?

God remembers us to bless us (Ps 115:12)

> 12 The Lord remembers us and will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron,

God remembers us because of His covenants (Ps 106:45)

> 45 for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.

God remembers us because of His promises (Mal 3:16-18)

> 16 Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name. 17 "They will be mine," says the Lord Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. 18 And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.

Provision of child (20, 25)

Children are a reward from God (Ps 127:3-5)

> 3 Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him. 4 Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. 5 Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.

Children are a blessing from God (Ps 128:3-4)

> 3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. 4 Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord.

Children are a sigh and symbol of God's provision (Isa 8:18)

> 18 Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion.

Children are a crown to the aged (Prov 17:6)

> 6 Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.

Children who have been promised by God (Luke 1:13)

> 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.

Children to provide a family for those who fear God (Exodus 1:21)

> 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Conclusion

Our text reveals the godliness of both Hannah and Elkanah as a backdrop against the poor parenting of Eli and the worthlessness of his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Elkanah is a godly husband who is sensitive to his wife's agony of soul. He seeks to encourage her in deed (he gives her a double portion of the sacrificial meat and speaks kind and gentle words of encouragement to her, assuring her of his love for her, regardless of whether she bears any children). He gently reminds her that her spirit of sadness is inappropriate to her worship. He grants her freedom to worship without smothering her or dictating her every action. He lets her go to worship alone, where she makes a vow. While he could have nullified her vow, he does not. He allows her the freedom to decide when she will go up to Shiloh with Samuel.

Elkanah is also a godly man in his relationship with God. He is concerned that his wife does the right thing before God. He is faithful to make the annual trek to Shiloh, even though there are good excuses for not doing so. He could say that he doesn't have the time or that it is too expensive. More to the point, he could point to the corruption of the priesthood, especially Hophni and Phinehas, saying that he doesn't want to expose his family to their hypocrisy, immorality, or brutality. He knows full well that at this time of annual worship Peninnah makes things especially difficult for Hannah and for him. In spite of all these reasons for not worshipping God at Shiloh, one could expect to see him there year after year.

Hannah is an example of a godly woman and wife. She endures years of silent suffering because of her barrenness and cruel harassment at the hand of her rival, Peninnah. She accompanies her husband and family (including Peninnah) to Shiloh, knowing how painful it always is. Largely she suffers silently, with no indication that she retaliates against her counterpart, Peninnah. She faithfully worships God, pouring out her tears and petitions. And when God answers her prayers, she not only keeps her vow, she praises God in a way that continues to inspire and encourage saints throughout the centuries. As surely as Eli's parental failures played a part in the shameful conduct of his sons as priests, so the godliness of Hannah and her husband positively influence Samuel's priesthood. And they positively influence us as examples of godly faith and action today.

***Our text lays the foundation for the unfolding of the events depicted in 1 and 2 Samuel*.** The last verse of the Book of Judges speaks once again of the fact that Israel has no king at this time. Hannah's prophetic psalm speaks of the coming of a king. Hannah and Elkanah, like their New Testament counterparts, Zacharias and Elizabeth (see Luke 1), are childless. Both barren wives become the mother of a prophet, who designates the coming king. As Samuel designates both Saul and David, so John the Baptist designates Jesus the Nazarene as God's Messiah and King.

Hannah's worship provides great insight into the role of women in worship in the Old Testament times. Her role is not a public or official one, yet she continues to have great spiritual impact on saints down through the ages. Conversely, Eli's official status and public visibility does nothing for his spiritual life or the spiritual lives of his sons. Hannah, in her silent suffering, and in her quiet and unseen ministry to Samuel, has a great and lasting impact on her times and ours as well. Hannah's prayer of petition, which expresses her vow to God, is silent, but the result of her prayer has national significance. Her prayer of praise is a part of Holy Scripture and the source of great instruction, comfort, and encouragement. While she had no official leadership position and her ministry was private, she still had great spiritual impact. Let those men or women who wish prominence, visibility, position, and status learn from the way God used Hannah and her ministry.

Hannah's suffering and her psalm is a paradigm of the way God reveals Himself through the Scriptures. Hannah's psalm, like all the rest of the Scriptures, is the product of human effort, superintended and divinely empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is both the product of human effort and the expression of a human personality, shaped by the things Hannah experienced. She could not have written this portion of Scripture without having suffered as she did at the hand of Peninnah, due to her barrenness. Neither could Hannah have written what she did about the future without divine inspiration. Her words which have been recorded for us are also the word of God.

Hannah's psalm, like every other portion of Scripture, is the writing of a person which reflects her education, her personality, and her background of experiences. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit, which conveys **the "mind of God"** to us. Just as our Lord was both undiminished deity and perfect humanity in one Person, so the Scriptures are the product of man and the work of God in one work.

Hannah's psalm could not have been written without the suffering which precedes it. It is God who closes Hannah's womb. It is God who purposes for her to suffer at the hand of her cruel counterpart, Peninnah. It is God who orchestrates all of the painful and pleasant events in Hannah's life, so that the resulting psalm could become the masterpiece it is. This is the way God employs the human and the divine in the writing of all the Scriptures. While you and I do not write Scripture today, I believe God orchestrates our background and our lives in a way which uniquely prepares and equips us for the ministry He has for us. Let us refuse to see our past difficulties as hindrances to the present or the future. As we look back upon the painful memories of our past, let us look upon them as the foundation stones for our present and future ministry, and then let us rejoice in our tribulations and trials in light of the way God purposes to use them for our good and for His glory.

Our text is a picture of the way God brings about His blessings and manifests His grace in the midst of sorrow, suffering, and human weakness. Having just concluded a study of 1 and 2 Corinthians, I cannot help but see the parallels between Hannah's experiences and psalm and Paul's experiences and epistles. Think about these words from the pen of Paul in light of Hannah's suffering and her resulting psalm:

7b . . .there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:7b-10).

As Paul makes so clear in his epistles, God's power is demonstrated at the point of our weaknesses. That is grace. God's grace does not seek out our strong points and enhance them, so much as His grace seeks out our weakest points so that it may be absolutely clear to all that it is God who accomplishes great things through us. Those things which cause Hannah the greatest sorrow, the greatest pain, are the very things God uses to produce her greatest joys. For those who trust in Him, it will always be this way:

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified (Romans 8:28-30).

Do you love God? Are you one of His children by faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in your place? This is the good news of the gospel. The gospel is not good news for those who think they are righteous. It is an offense. Such people think God owes them eternal life, and they despise God's saving grace in Christ as "charity." It is charity! *Those who joyfully embrace the good news of the gospel know they are helplessly and hopelessly lost in their sins, worthy only of God's eternal wrath. They rejoice in the fact that what they cannot do to earn God's salvation, Christ has done for them by His death, burial, and resurrection. They gratefully receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of righteousness as divine charity. And they come to learn that the same principle of divine grace, by which they are saved, is the principle by which God continues to work in their lives.* I pray that you have received the grace of God through the gift of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. If not, I pray that you will receive it and Him this very hour.

(Adapted from URL:https://bible.org/seriespage/son-and-psalm-hannah-1-samuel-11-210)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Hannah faithfully approached God with her grief, desire, and need. Because she did, God allowed her to play a role in the grand narrative of God's design. Hannah's fidelity to her vow put her son in the right place at the right time to lead Israel as a priest, judge, and prophet. God does not always answer prayers like he did for Hannah. Sometimes his answer is "no." Hannah herself shows that God has no obligation to grant our desires. However, when our prayers align with his plans and come from a place of righteous motives, God will often welcome our participation in his sovereign work. Hannah models faithfulness in prayer, bravery in the face of false accusations, and dedication to her word. She asks God for her heart's desire and then willingly returns that gift to God. Every mother knows the strength required to follow through with such a vow! May we all learn to have such faithfulness, submission, trust, and generosity in our relationships with God.