

1 Samuel 1:1-28 – “Hannah’s Faith”

(Pew Bible Page: 225)

Intro: Our Bibles tell us that God is sovereign and is at work Providentially all around us to accomplish His plan. But our Bibles also tell us that somehow, we play a part in all of that. The intersection of God’s Providence and Man’s actions is mysterious. However, one simple word brings both together: Faith. Tonight, we’ll see how Providence and Faith worked together in the life of God’s servant, Hannah, to further God’s plan to transition the nation of Israel from leadership by Judges to leadership by Kings, and ultimately by one King who is yet to come.

Proposition: God is sovereignly moving His plan forward every day. We join Him by simply obeying His Word.

Billboard: Tonight we’ll work our way through the passage
 Then, make three brief applications

The Passage:

(vv.1-2) A Certain man and his barren wife, Hannah – God often works through this pattern of God’s choosing and man’s barrenness: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Manoah’s wife, Hannah, Elizabeth mother of John the Baptist. Note that all these women were chosen by God to move His plan of redemption forward, yet all were initially barren – unable to produce a child. Why does God so often work through this pattern in Scripture? One reason may be to emphasize that God is the giver of life. Each of these children were given by God for a specific role in the story of redemption. In this same way, the story of each one of us is unique, yet necessary to redemption’s story. *We are all barren until God brings us to spiritual life, moving forward His plan of redemption through our inclusion.*

(vv.3-8) Two things emphasized: Godliness and Ungodliness – Godliness is pictured here in Elkanah and Hannah; ungodliness through Hophni, Phineas, and Peninnah. God, through Hannah’s son, Samuel, was about to transition His people from leadership by Judges to leadership by Kings. All these figures would play their part in that drama, and the part of the ungodly was, as always, to persecute the Godly line. Peninnah made Hannah’s life miserable, and that affliction was part of God’s Providential working in this story. Hannah seems to have borne this persecution with quietness and dignity. Elkanah sought to console her but could do nothing to relieve the affliction of her heart. Why? Because the affliction was from God. Affliction brought Hannah to prayer. *God uses the afflictions of His people as part of His plan.*

(vv.9-11) In her affliction, Hannah sought the Lord’s presence – Dependence on God is demonstrated through believing prayer. Hannah prayed from the *heart*. No mere mental ascent here! The deepest part of her reached out to God in faith, no doubt spurred on by the affliction Peninnah was causing her to suffer. From her heart came a vow: She vowed to dedicate her son to God as a perpetual Nazirite. Note the similarities between Samson and Samuel, both perpetual Nazirites from their mother’s womb. This similarity is obviously intentional. What is the difference between the two? Samson had little regard for obedience to God, but Samuel was all about faithfulness. This is a crucial difference between the Kings

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God accepted and those He rejected as we’ll see later. Obedience was the one great requirement for a king to be acceptable to God. As with Samson and Samuel, God used them all – all who were appointed king were used of God to further His purpose. But only the obedient were acceptable to God. *God uses all men to tell His story but accepts and rewards only the faithful.*

(vv.12-18) Hannah’s heartfelt prayer was misunderstood by Eli – Hannah said, *“Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman...”* Compare this with 2:12 where this word, “worthless,” is used to describe Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phineas. Godly Hannah sought to distinguish herself from the worthlessness of the ungodly. Eli was the Judge of Israel yet could rebuke the Godly and remain silent toward the wicked. To his credit, when Hannah explained herself, Eli gave her a blessing, which Hannah’s believing heart latched onto in faith. Eli occupied the place of High Priest and Judge, and like a later High Priest, Caiaphas, was used by God to voice His truth, despite his unfaithfulness (cf. John 11:49-51). *God will even speak His truth to the faithful through the lips of unfaithful servants.*

(vv.19-20) Hannah’s prayer was answered by God – God planned all along to send Samuel to be His prophet through Hannah. Hannah’s prayer did not cause God’s Providence; God’s Providence caused Hannah’s prayer. God was at work through Hannah causing her *“both to will and to work for his good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:12-13). Hannah was chosen by God to be the mother of His prophet Samuel, and Hannah’s prayer was brought about through the Providence of Peninnah’s affliction of Hannah. God was behind it all. True prayer does not *cause* God’s will and work but *reveals* God’s will and work in through the believer. *When by a faith like Hannah’s we join Him in His work, we are honored to be revealed as His servants.*

(vv.21-28) Elkanah and Hannah continued in faithfulness at great cost to themselves – It could not have been easy for them to keep their vow. Elkanah even cautioned Hannah not to waiver, so the temptation to renege must have been obvious. How would Hannah pass the test? She passed the test by staying faithful, and this at great cost to herself. *“And he worshipped the Lord there,”* says the last verse of our text. But who is the “he” being spoken of? Many commentators believe it is Eli, but I think it better suits to understand the “he” as Samuel. As our story of God’s sovereignty goes on, we’ll see that Samuel seems to be the only whole-hearted worshipper of God in Shiloh. Eli seems half-hearted at best, and Hophni and Phineas worshipped only their own lusts. God has Samuel, His man in the making by the end of the chapter, and all through this interaction between His Providence and Hannah’s Faith. The story is still the same today. *God is Providentially at work daily in our lives and we enter His plan as we walk by faith.*

Three Brief Applications:

1. God’s Providence and our Obedience work together to reveal God’s plan. Hannah’s story of Faith typifies the intersection of these two things:

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- God’s Providence: Hanna was *chosen*; Hanna was *afflicted*.
- Man’s Obedience: Hannah *prayed and trusted*; Hanna was *diligent in obedience*; Hannah was *sacrificial*.

Hannah’s story typifies the intersection between God’s Providence and our Responsibility, and so does your story and mine.

2. Our part is not to divine God’s plan but to obey His Word. Hannah had no idea what God was doing through her barrenness, affliction, and being misunderstood by Eli. She fulfilled her role in God’s drama of redemption brilliantly, however, by simply being faithful to what she knew of God. God accomplishes the *Macro* through us as we are faithful in the *Micro*. Do you want to be part of God’s plan? Be faithful to obey His Word. Puritan, John Flavel gives us two rules to bear in mind as we follow God’s leading: 1) Always make sure that the Word overrules whatever your circumstances seem to be saying; 2) No hindrances or disturbances justify disobedience to a divine command. Obedience comes first if we want to join God in His plans.
3. God glorifies Himself in the intersection of His Providence and our Faith. God’s will cannot be thwarted. Both the godly and the ungodly work together to bring to completion God’s purposes, but only those who obey His commands are acceptable in His sight. There is a reward for the righteous and the full enjoyment of that reward comes through obedience to His Word. Salvation is not in view here, but rather the matter of our being revealed as His partners in redemption. Grace accomplishes salvation once and for all. But how we build on that foundation glorifies God and reveals our true condition as we obey God’s Word. There is no doubt that Hannah was not a “*worthless woman*.” Her faith in God revealed both His glory and hers.

Conclusion: God is sovereignly moving His plan of redemption forward every day. We join Him in this great endeavor by simply obeying His Word, and when we do that, an amazing thing happens: God is glorified for His plan, and we are honored by being revealed as His servants. What greater privilege could we enjoy? God is Providentially at work in the world around us every day. Let’s be faithful to join Him in His work, by obeying His Word.