

Good morning! My name is Matt Chesney; I am the director of youth and outreach here at Eagle Ridge and it is my honor to be speaking with you today. If you are just joining us for the first time we are on a Journey through the Bible – reading through the entire Bible in a year chronologically. Each day we read for about 10-15 minutes and on Sundays we come together and have some teaching on some of the bits that we read. Obviously, there is WAY too much in even a week to cover in 1 sermon, but we do our best to hit some major points and try to show how the Old Testament connects to the New Testament and shows the overall arc/plan of God throughout.

Today, we are going to focus on 1 Samuel, chapter 2, verses 1-10 – which perhaps seems like an odd place to focus with everything that we read this week – but there is some deep theological messaging here that the casual reader might miss and we want to make sure You don't!

These particular verses are a prayer that a woman named Hannah prays out loud to God in a very strange situation. And before we read the prayer and dive into understanding it, we need to understand the context of the situation – just in case you fell behind on your reading a bit or are new.

So, Hannah was married to a man that had 2 wives. His other wife had given him many children; and Hannah was barren and could not have children. And even though heirs and children in this culture was a BIG deal to the family structure, the husband loved Hannah the most. Because of this he doted on her and favored her... and his other wife became her rival and provoked her constantly. So, Hannah, feeling unworthy of her husband's love, (feeling insufficient), prayed to God to give her a son – and promised that if God gave her a son she would dedicate him to God and give him to the temple for God's service.

Now you might think that this is the prayer we are focusing on today... but it isn't! That situation is interesting, but not as interesting as what is to come. So, God answered Hannah's prayer; she had a son and named him Samuel. At last Hannah felt worthy. At last Hannah had the one thing that she wanted so desperately – a child! Now, keep in mind, this did not change how her husband felt about her – he still loved her just as much. It likely did not change how the other wife felt about her – I'm sure she still provoked her and caused trouble. But for Hannah this was proof that God had not forgotten her and that she was heard and loved.

For the next 3 years Hannah weaned him, loved him, and cared for him until it was time to take him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh as she had promised. So, she takes the

boy, presents him to the chief priest, Eli, and gives the boy to him – and then prays this prayer.

Now, this prayer is just REMARKABLE. I can't imagine what I would be feeling giving up my 3 year old son after waiting so long for him and being given a son only after God performs a miracle in answer to a prayer I made... But I know it would be intense. Knowing "me" so well.. I would probably start to bargain with God or Eli. I would be looking for a way to keep my son. I would maybe even try to move – so that I could live in the same place as my son so that I could care for him and watch him grow. I would likely be selfish, protective, ungrateful, and probably even angry in that situation. And this is why I say that Hannah's prayer is remarkable. Hannah is clearly filled with the Holy Spirit in this moment and is given a supernatural strength and God-like perspective – because the first words out of her mouth are:

Then Hannah prayed and said:

"My heart rejoices in the LORD;
in the LORD my horn is lifted high. (we will come back to this horn thing later)
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
for I delight in your deliverance.

1 Samuel 2:1 NIV

My heart rejoices!? My mouth boasts!? I delight!? What!? How is this possible?

Hannah, in the midst of what is likely the most difficult moment of her life – giving her 3 year old son away – is praising God. She understands that the blessing she has received was given by God and she would not have the joy she has now if He had not given it to her. Hannah has a God-like perspective that is so profound that she has the ability to Rejoice in her blessings. This is only possible through God. And Hannah recognizes that. And she continues:

² "There is no one holy like the LORD;
there is no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.

1 Samuel 2:2 NIV

She understands that God is Holy and Unique. There is NO ONE **holy** like the Lord. There is NO ONE besides God. There is NO ROCK like our God. God is set apart. He is different, unique, special.

Now, every verse of this prayer is packed with insight, theological teaching, and prophecy. She has already rejoiced in the Lord and proclaimed his unique nature, and now she shifts to warning for others. She says:

³ "Do not keep talking so proudly
or let your mouth speak such arrogance,
for the LORD is a God who knows,
and by him deeds are weighed.

1 Samuel 2:3 NIV

Because God is just... because he is holy... because he is unique and all-knowing... **God knows your heart and will judge everyone.** We need to be careful with our words and actions. We need to live in fear (respect) of God.

Hannah then continues with a couple of interesting stanzas that compliment each other well. They both highlight theological truths concerning God's nature but in different regards. The first says:

⁴ "The bows of the warriors are broken,
but those who stumbled are armed with strength.
⁵ Those who were full hire themselves out for food,
but those who were hungry are hungry no more.
She who was barren has borne seven children,
but she who has had many sons pines away.

1 Samuel 2:4-5 NIV

Which highlights **God's propensity to humble the proud and exalt the weak.** This series of "reversals" then leads into the next stanza which says:

⁶ "The LORD brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up.
⁷ The LORD sends poverty and wealth;
he humbles and he exalts.
⁸ He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes
and has them inherit a throne of honor.

1 Samuel 2:6-8a NIV

Now, in this section it is similar to the reversal stanza, but Hannah employs a technique of “extremes” to say something else about God. She puts God in control of everything and highlights this power using concepts at opposite extreme ends of the spectrum. Death and life. Poverty and wealth. Low status to Honored. Hannah is teaching us that **God is Sovereign** over all aspects of human life. And even though God has complete authority and control over everything, he chooses, due to his nature and holiness, to use that power to benefit us. Well... not everyone... as we will see in a moment...:

“For the foundations of the earth are the LORD’s;
on them he has set the world.
⁹ He will guard the feet of his faithful servants,
but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness.

“It is not by strength that one prevails;
¹⁰ those who oppose the LORD will be broken.
The Most High will thunder from heaven;
the LORD will judge the ends of the earth.

1 Samuel 2:8b-10a

The prayer takes a turn here again and we begin to see some symmetry appear more clearly. The middle 2 stanzas fit nicely together and mirrored each other well regarding God’s sovereignty and how he applies it. And now, here, in verses 8-10 we come back to judgement like we saw in verse 3. But this time it is a little different. It seems to be setting something up. Something big. It continues the sovereignty theme by saying that the foundations of the earth are the Lord’s, and again explains that He uses this power to guard the feet of his faithful servants – but then explains that the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness. This newly introduced “extreme” is not focused on God, but instead on US. **The faithful are saved, the wicked are silenced**. This is a message of salvation in the midst of judgement.

But, how will he deliver this salvation? How are the faithful saved? Well, that is answered in the 2nd half of verse 10 in an astounding way – a way that is easy to miss when reading in English. It says:

“He will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

1 Samuel 2:10b NIV

Now, this one sentence is so powerful and amazing that it would have shook the entire room when Hannah spoke it. And I am going to do my best to explain why.

First, at this point in time Israel had no king – nor was any king even being considered. We just finished reading the book of Judges, where God raised up mighty men and women to lead God’s people over and over again – yet none of them were ever referred to as king in any way at all. This wasn’t even a thought.

Next, the word anointed at the end is very special. In fact, this is the first time it has been used in the Bible so far. It is the Hebrew word “mashiach” which more literally translated means “messiah.” You may be starting to understand that importance of this prayer now... but we aren’t done yet... Because,

Finally, do you see that word “horn” again? That’s the same word we saw in verse 1 that I said we would come back to. Well, that is also a special word. In the Old Testament the term “horn” used in this way often signifies strength or power. But it is different that physical strength. It is typically used to describe the strength of a family tree/tribe, a nation, or kingdom. We see this a lot in Ezekiel later in the Bible when he starts talking about little horns and big horns and all sorts of kingdoms that will rise up and conquer each other.

So, in verse 10 we have a messianic king who’s “horn” is exalted – in other words a messianic king with a powerful kingdom.

Now, if that was all, that would be pretty awesome, but that’s not all. You see Hannah in verse 1 is talking about how HER horn is lifted high. So, there’s got to be something special about her family tree too... Well, Samuel grows up and anoints the first two kings of Israel: Saul and David. We’ll talk about those guys later, I’m sure; but David becomes a symbol of the messianic king – a “Pre-Jesus” so-to-speak. And God promises that David’s descendant will reign forever. So, Hannah’s family tree (in Samuel) announces and paves the way for God’s anointed king.

But wait, there’s more!

Who announced or paved the way for Jesus when he was born? Well, if you said John the Baptist, you’d be correct. And something interesting about that story is that John’s mother was also barren, very old, and couldn’t have children. And then God blessed her and gave her a son! He told her and her husband Zachariah that this son would announce and pave the way for the messianic king! But Zach didn’t really believe all this, so he was struck silent until the baby was born. When John the Baptist was born, Zach

was miraculously able to speak again – and the first thing he did was pray to God out loud in front of everyone. And this was his prayer:

⁶⁸ "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.
⁶⁹ **He has raised up a horn of salvation for us**
in the house of his servant David
⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),
⁷¹ salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—
⁷² to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,
⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear
⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
⁷⁶ And you, my child, (speaking to his son John the Baptist) will be called a prophet of
the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace."
Luke 1:67-79 NIV

Pretty awesome right? I love the connections. Here we have 2 sets of parents, both unable to have children, and yet, God makes a way. Then when their son's are born they both acknowledge and identify the awesome, holy, and sovereign nature of God and the promise that God has made. They proclaim that their sons will announce the way for the coming messianic king of God.

Let's look at these verses side by side:

⁶⁸ "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David

Luke 1:68-69

“He will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

1 Samuel 2:10b NIV

The message that Hannah (and Zacheriah) have for us is that God will send (has sent) a messianic king for our salvation and redemption.

They are announcing the Gospel – the Good News – to come. They know the king hasn’t arrived yet, but they are excited for the future and trust in the Lord and His promises.

So, what do we do about all of this? I mean, this is some really cool stuff to learn about, but, how does it apply to me? To us? So, let’s talk about a couple of Steps of Obedience.

First, I would recommend that you reflect upon and pray back to God the truths that Hannah has taught us today. Go through them one by one and talk about them with God. Have a conversation with him on each of these points. Discuss with him where you are struggling. Share with him your impatience or anxiety. Rest in his Sovereignty and Grace. And renew your faith and trust in his anointed king Jesus.

Second, I am going to encourage you to share Hannah’s prayer with someone else. This prayer contains so much theological truth in just 10 little verses. Reading it to someone else, and walking them through the points that Hannah makes would be an excellent way to introduce them to Jesus – or simply to encourage someone who is struggling. You could share this with your children. You could share it with a parent. Or just a friend you know. But this prayer was not prayed in isolation. It was not a private conversation between Hannah and God – it was proclaimed in front of many people for all to hear. It was meant to be shared. It was meant to be understood. And it announced something so incredible that the people that first heard it probably had no idea what she meant in the last sentence – but they knew it was important. It’s our turn. We need to share these truths with others.