

## Faith at Home and Abroad – I Samuel 1:18

### I. Introduction:

- A. In this series of lessons I am trying to provide examples of practical faith in the Lord.
1. And if we are talking about **real life** then at some point we have to include our lives **at home**.
  2. At the very least, we begin our day and end our day at home, and for many of us 95 per cent or more of the rest of our day involves our homes.
- B. In **I Samuel 1** we are introduced to the home of Elkanah of Ramath-a-im-zophim in the tribe of Ephraim.
1. I can't say that his family was typical of his day, because I don't know, but, in many details, it was very different from ours.
  2. But it was still a home which included a husband and wife, living in an obviously loving relationship.
    - a. We are specifically told in **verse 5** that Elkanah loved Hannah.
    - b. I wonder if there were specific things which drew his heart to her.
    - c. Was it her faith, her meekness, or perhaps just the opposite: her boldness?
    - d. Was it physical beauty or was it that inner beauty that is even more attractive?
    - e. We don't know, and it may not be important, except for the lesson that we should all strive to be attractive to others, for the sake of our Saviour.
  3. But people are like snow flakes in that no two are exactly alike.
  4. We may look at others and see similarities in size and shape, and yet there are always differences
- C. In the case of Hannah, Elkanah's first wife, there was a burden which nearly crushed her soul.
1. She wasn't satisfied merely to be her husband's "**help meet**." She wanted to be more.
  2. The single Hebrew word "**help meet**" is found only twice in the Bible, and both are in **Genesis 2**.
  3. John Gill explains a "**help meet**" this way: she is "**one to help (her husband) in all the affairs of life,**
    - a. *not only for the propagation of his species, but to provide things useful and comfortable for him;*
    - b. *to dress his food, and take care of the affairs of the family;*
    - c. *One 'like himself' in nature, temper, and disposition, in form and shape; or one 'as before him,'*
    - d. *that would be pleasing to his sight, and with whom he might delightfully converse, and be in all respects agreeable to him, and entirely answerable to his case and circumstances, his wants and wishes.*"
  4. Gill suggests that a "**help meet**" is a wife who supports her husband in about ten areas of life.
  5. Hannah may have excelled in nine of those areas, but that she failed in one made her miserable.
  6. **Verse 2** says that Hannah had no children.
- D. Let's try to take this very real and practical situation and draw some spiritual applications out of it.

### II. Hannah had a problem.

- A. Despite Elkanah's efforts to tell her, and to show his wife, that he loved her, she felt like a failure to him.
1. Despite what others may have thought, she felt that she wasn't the wife her husband needed.
  2. Fixing delicious meals was not the same as mending a son's scraped knee.
  3. Praying with Elkanah was not the same as teaching a daughter how to pray.
  4. Although she loved to intelligently talk with her husband about the Lord, she yearned to speak the simple language of a child with her own children.
  5. She couldn't feel satisfied just supporting him, praying for him, praising him and encouraging him.
- B. If you'll permit my transition –
1. She didn't want to be just one of those church members who attended the services regularly, praying for the Lord's blessings on the preaching of the Word.
  2. She was friendly, greeting all her friends and the first time visitors as they came in the door.
  3. She joined in the singing of the songs of Zion, & she wished she had a better voice or could play the piano.
  4. She taught a Sunday School class for other people's children, but not for her own.

5. But she wanted children. She longed to know that there were babes in her church family, because the Lord had used her to bring them into His world.
6. She longed to be a catalyst for the Lord's glory, not just an observer and encourager.
7. She contributed nine wonderful things to the family of God, but she had not yet added to their number.
8. And it was breaking her heart.

C. Obviously, life is not under our control. Hannah was not in charge.

1. I doubt that it was her choice that Elkanah took another wife who could give him babies.
2. Even if Peninnah hadn't gone out of her way to torment her, just seeing the Lord's blessings on that woman tore a hole in Hannah's heart.
3. But *"her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb"*
4. Hannah, believed in Jehovah's sovereign control over all the affairs of the world.
5. She probably felt that her barrenness was punishment from the Lord.
6. She didn't merely want to be a good wife or a good Christian; she wanted to be the best Christian possible.

### III. Hannah had a problem. How could it be solved?

A. Every year, Elkanah took his family, traveling the twelve miles from their home down to Shiloh. Twelve miles.

1. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that he went more often, but as a family, they made the trip once a year.
2. Jerusalem had not yet been established as Israel's capital or religious center.
3. The Ark of the Covenant and what was left of the Tabernacle were at Shiloh.
4. Eli, the high priest was semi-retired, and his sons, Hophni & Phinehas, served there as the primary priests.
5. Year after year, Elkanah and his family brought sacrifices to God's altar, which included Peace offerings.
6. The Sin offerings were to be totally consumed by the fire as Burnt sacrifices, but the Peace offerings were to be shared between the Lord, the priests who officiated the service and the families which brought them.
7. After the sacrifices were made, the worshiping families celebrated with a feast, dining on the left shoulder of the sacrificed animal.

B. Year by year, Hannah attended those worship services, but her heart ached when she saw Peninnah's children bowing before the Lord, while she had none. And her rival made sure she was miserable.

1. Each time they made the trip, Peninnah had another child to take with her, but Hannah had none.
2. And on this particular trip, Hannah couldn't do much more than to weep.
3. Elkanah knew the problem, but his words didn't stop the ache in her heart. *"Why weepest thou? And why eapest thou not, and why is thy heart grieved: am not better to thee than ten sons?"*
4. As wonderful as their relationship was, as far as Hannah was concerned, nothing could make up for her childlessness.
  - a. She didn't want to be a good wife; she wanted to be a complete wife.
  - b. She didn't want to be a good Christian; she wanted the fulness of the Spirit and to be as useful to the Lord as possible.
5. She was like Rachel in **Genesis 30**, who *"envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die."*

C. On this particular occasion, Elkanah convinced her to join in the feast and to at least appear to be happy.

1. But after the meal she went out toward the Tabernacle *"in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow."*
2. Hannah's response to this burden on her heart was to make a faith-based promise to God.
3. If *"thou wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life."*

D. I have no means with which to measure Hannah's faith at this point.

1. It appears to me to be small, and I can understand.
2. Just like you and me, we have been praying for some particular blessing for years, but we still haven't received a positive reply.

3. That sort of thing can naturally drain a person's faith. It shouldn't, but it does.
4. And yet I still detect a bit of faith in this woman.

E. Incidentally, Israel had an interesting law in regard to a vow like this.

1. **Numbers 30:8** declares that such a promise could be overturned by the woman's husband.
2. *"If her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vow and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect; and the Lord shall forgive her."*
3. But *"if her husband hear it, and held his peace at her, and disallowed her not; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand" – verse 11.*
4. So the question arises, did Hannah share this vow with Elkanah before she sacrificed her future son to the Lord? I've always pictured it as her decision, and her husband, out of love, let the vow stand.
5. In other words, this was **her** vow and **her** faith, before it became **his**.
6. Sometimes, many times, the faith of a godly wife is stronger than that of her husband. Such is the reality.

F. When Eli, the priest, saw the poor woman in prayer, watching her lips moving, but not seeing her tears, he unjustly concluded that she was drunk.

1. He might have observed their offering earlier in the day and had known there was a Peace offering and the usual festive celebration following.
2. Perhaps, over the years, he had seen drunkenness come as a result of these feasts.
3. But he had no reason to think that Hannah was inebriated – committing a PUI (prayer under the influence).
4. To explain herself, *"Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine or nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD."*
5. We notice in the context here that she didn't explain her prayer or vow.
6. The priest didn't know what she had asked or promised to the Lord.

G. Probably embarrassed, *"Eli answered and said, Go in peace; and the God Israel grant thy petition that thou hast asked of him."*

1. Commentators are divided on this, but I think that Eli was simply saying, *"I will add my prayers to yours."*
2. I don't think that he, as God's representative, was promising that her request was to be granted.
3. I hope that his prayer on her behalf was an encouragement to her faith.
4. God is not unmindful of the prayers of a single fervent heart, but there should be encouragement to our faith when someone else joins their prayer to ours.

H. Hannah was **asking** the Lord for what she probably considered to be a **miracle**.

1. No, she is not yet as old as Sarah, but she had been waiting years for a baby.
2. Obviously, the problem was with her, not her husband. Oh Lord, *"Give me children, or else I die."*
3. Those may not have been her words, but nevertheless, she had the same depth of burden.
4. *"Oh God, make me useful, enable me to be productive. Permit me to bring glory to the one I love."*

I. Is this the **reason WE** aren't **experiencing** the **fullness** of God's blessings?

1. We are beginning to see showers of divine blessings, but not yet any rivers and floods.
2. Is it because we are not as burdened about our barrenness as Hannah was?
3. Sure our faith may not be all that it could be, but neither was Hannah's.
4. Don't fret about the size or strength of your faith. Just put into use the faith you have right now.

#### IV. As you know Hannah's faith was recognized by the Lord, and a baby was born.

A. *"Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his Samuel, saying, because I have asked him of the Lord."*

1. Elkanah must have been so pleased and proud. You can be sure that he wanted to show that baby off.
2. But when it came time to make the next family trip to Shiloh, Hannah asked to be dismissed.

3. She knew that this baby belonged to the Lord, and she intended to keep her promise, but the time was not ripe.
4. *"I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever."*
5. Elkanah certainly knew about the vow by now, but he apparently agreed with his wife that this baby was not ready to be sacrificed. He wasn't as old as Isaac had been.

B. I have read that according to Jewish custom children were *"weaned,"* so-to-speak, three times.

1. They were generally taken from their mother's milk at about the age of two.
  - a. Later they were considered to leave their infancy at the age of seven.
  - b. Then they left their childhood at the age of twelve.
2. I can't vouch for the accuracy of that information, and even Gill seems to waffle about it.
3. But I can't see Hannah leaving her son with Eli at the age of two or even three.
  - a. Perhaps she agreed to give him up at seven, but twelve seems more logical.
  - b. I suppose that it isn't too important to the history.
4. The fact is, Elkanah eventually kept the vow and honored Hannah's faith by giving their son to the Lord.

C. And once again we come back to this important point:

1. The end of our faith, must be to the praise and honor of the Lord, the one in whom we put our trust.
2. I have no doubt that Hannah's heart was filled with joy when God answered her faith with the birth of a little boy.
3. And there was probably some sorrow when she eventually sacrificed her son to God's glory.
4. But that sorrow was tempered with another kind of joy.
5. It was the joy of giving to God what He has loaned to her.
6. When you get an opportunity, please read *1 Samuel 2*, which begins with Hannah's song of praise.
7. If there is an unwillingness to give to the Lord the honor and even the physical results of your faith, then perhaps you shouldn't ask the Lord for these things in the first place.

## V. Conclusion

- A. We yearn to see the miraculous power of God, *not necessarily* in divine healing and *certainly* not in speaking in tongues, but rather in the birth of spiritual children.
  1. We all should plead with the Lord to bless His spiritual family through our faith and even through our lives.
  2. It is not unscriptural to make promises to the Lord in regard to our faith.
  3. But if we do, we must keep our promise and be ready to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to glorify our Saviour.
- B. And by the way, the faith of this woman, produced one of the greatest prophets in Israel's history.
  1. Who can say what the Lord will do with our spiritual children – children born out of due time – born even out of our barrenness.
  2. The names of the parents of Samuel have been recorded in eternal history.
  3. There is no reason why our names couldn't similarly be recorded.
  4. But do we have the faith to become spiritual parents like that?
  5. Oh, Lord, bless us with faith like Hannah's.