

“Hannah Keeps Her Vow”
1 Samuel 1:19-28
(Preached at Trinity, April 17, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **1 Samuel** opens with the account of Samuel's birth. It begins with the introduction of Elkanah and his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah was fertile and enjoyed the birth of children while Hannah was barren.
2. To make matters worse for Hannah, Peninnah often teased her because of her childlessness; not light hearted humor but cruel mocking. This caused ever increasing sorrow to Hannah.
3. As we saw last time Hannah responded as one who had entrusted her life to God. She prayed. But we find something else here. She made a vow.
4. We find vows many times in Scripture – some 80 times. The entire chapter of **Numbers 30** is devoted to the proper use of vows. Vows are basically promises or pledges to God.
5. The vow became synonymous with a pledge of faithfulness to God.
Isaiah 19:21 NAU - "Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it."
6. The OT gives numerous examples of vows made for various reasons in various contexts.
 - A. A man could pledge himself to the vows of a Nazirite, becoming consecrated unto God. **Numbers 6** is devoted to the Nazirite vow.
 - B. In **Genesis 28** Jacob made a vow of commitment to God if God would bless his journey and provide for him
Genesis 28:20-21 NAU - "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, ²¹ and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God."
 - C. The example that stands out among others is the vow of Jephthah. It was in the form of, "God if you do this, I will to that."
Judges 11:30-31 NAU - "Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, "If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, ³¹ then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."
7. In the NT we find an example of Paul making a vow.
Acts 18:18 NAU - "Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cencrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow."

8. Our Confession addresses the subject of oaths and vows.
 More space is dedicated to oaths. An oath is calling upon God to witness the truthfulness of our words.
 A vow is a pledge of commitment or promise of action before God.
 LBC Chapter 23:5
 “A vow, which is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone, is to be made and performed with all religious care and faithfulness”
9. A vow is a promise of commitment before God. A vow must not be made hastily, without careful consideration of our ability to keep it.
 Tonight I want us to consider Hannah’s vow. It is a model of every vow made before God.
- I. First of all, it was voluntary
- A. A vow is not a duty demanded of God
1. Hannah could have offered up her prayer alone
 2. Her vow gave weightiness to her petition
- B. A vow is similar to fasting. Fasting also is voluntary
- a. It is voluntary, but the NT assumes that we *will* fast.
Mark 2:18-20 NAU - "John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁹ And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰ "But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day."
Matthew 6:17-18 NAU - "when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face ¹⁸ so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."
 - b. Fasting gives weightiness to our prayers
Daniel 9:3 NAU - "So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes."
 - c. John Giarrizzo
 “Fasting brings a sense of urgency and importunity to our prayers. It is the God-ordained means for sharpening the edge of our intercessions.”
 - d. John Calvin saw the value of fasting with prayer, “Whenever supplication is to be made to God on any important occasion, it is befitting to appoint a period for fasting and prayer”
- C. Like fasting, Hannah made a vow to give weightiness to her prayer
- a. It was a demonstration that her request was a selfless request. She was vowing to give it back.
 - b. It was a demonstration of her zeal for God’s service. She was pledging her son as perpetual Nazarite and a perpetual servant of God.

- c. Usually, the Nazarite vow was made voluntarily by an individual. This is the second time we find a child pledged as a Nazarite before he was born. **Judges 13:7 NAU** - "Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death."

II. Vows were to be made carefully and intelligently

- A. A vow was not to be made rashly
1. Hannah had been barren many years. Many years she had gone with her husband to the annual sacrifice. And for many years she had endured the taunting of Peninnah.
1 Samuel 1:3 NAU - "Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh"
1 Samuel 1:4-6 NAU - "When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; ⁵ but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶ Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb."
 2. She understood clearly the consequences of her vow and was prepared to fulfill it.
 3. Contrast this with Jephthah's vow. He made it impulsively without considering the possible ramifications. He did not consider who might be the first to come out to meet him.
"Whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."
- B. We must be fully prepared to fulfill our vow
1. Once made, it must not be violated.
Numbers 30:2 NAU - "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."
Deuteronomy 23:21 NAU - "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you."
Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 NAU - "When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! ⁵ It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay."
 2. Hannah made her vow solemnly and humbly and she fulfilled it completely.
 3. The text tells us that God heard her prayer and she conceived a son.
1 Samuel 1:19 NAU - "And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her."

4. She waited until Samuel was weaned which could have been three years or longer, and then she fulfilled her vow – **Verses 24, 28**
Hannah, by the way, is the model for all Christian parents. God gives us our children, but they are actually His. We must give them over to God and pray that God would glorify Himself through them.
 5. Her husband understood the weightiness of her vow. As her husband Elkanah could have annulled Hannah’s vow.
 - a. This was a husband and father’s right.
Numbers 30:12 NAU - "But if her husband indeed annuls them on the day he hears them, then whatever proceeds out of her lips concerning her vows or concerning the obligation of herself shall not stand; her husband has annulled them, and the LORD will forgive her."
 - b. Elkanah understood the solemn vow Hannah had made. He understood her to be a serious and solemn woman. It was not a rash vow. He also understood the importance of a vow.
1 Samuel 1:23 NAU - "Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the LORD confirm His word."
- C. A vow must be made humbly for God’s glory, and from a heart of faith.
1. We must not make use of vows simply to acquire something. They are not bargaining tools. We must never try to bribe God—never a quid pro quo. Rather, vows are instruments of commitment to God, offered up for His glory. What Hannah wanted most was to be an instrument in God’s redemptive purpose.
 2. Hannah wanted a child and she wanted a child desperately, yet her vow demonstrated that she was not only prepared to submit to the LORD of Hosts. She was prepared to return God’s blessing back to Him.
 - a. When we prize God’s blessings more than we prize God we are guilty of idolatry.
 - b. To add to the payment of her vow, she added a generous offering when she presented Solomon to Eli—**Verses 24-25**
The **KJV** is probably more accurate here. Instead of a three-year old bull (NASB) she brought three bulls, which is how the Hebrew text reads.
 3. Hannah recognized that everything belonged to God. God gave Hannah a son but she knew that he belonged to God in the first place. It was only right that she use the gift in the praise of God.
 - a. God gave you’re your mind. Do you use your mind that God gave you to fill it with the Word of God? Do you fill it with good things?
Philippians 4:8 NAU - "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."
 - b. God gave you the ability to earn money. Do you consider it a blessing to return it to God in your tithe?

- c. God gave you your talents. Do you use them to God's glory? Do you complain if you do more in the church than others? You are actually being blessed above others when you can use your gifts in God's service.
4. This must be the scope of all of our prayers. "Not my will but Thine be done." Not self-centered but God-centered.
5. After God fulfilled her vow her heart was lifted up in praise.
1 Samuel 2:1 NAU - "My heart exults in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD"
6. Comparing Jephthah again, his motive was one of doubt and unbelief. His only desire was victory, at any cost. And a high cost it was. And when God fulfilled his vow his heart melted in sorrow.
Judges 11:35 NAU - "When he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you are among those who trouble me"

III. Do we make vows today?

- A. Marriage is a vow. A vow of lifetime faithfulness, commitment and sacrifice
 1. We make our wedding vows before God, and as Christians we make them before our covenant community.
 2. Our vow is basically:
I --- take thee --- to be my wedded wife, and do promise before God and these witnesses, to be a loyal and faithful husband, in plenty and want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and health, so long as we both shall live.
 3. It is a vow of service and sacrifice, of love and fidelity. All other relationships fade in significance. A husband's allegiance is to his wife and wife to her husband.
 4. How many today bring themselves under God's judgment by breaking their vows?
41% of married couples admit to an infidelity at some point
3 out of 5 marriages today end in divorce. Many today simply cohabitate which is just as wicked as vow breaking.
- B. There is a much greater vow we make as Christians
 1. As a Christian you have vowed allegiance to Christ.
Romans 10:9 NAU - "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved"
 2. The Gospel demands an absolute commitment to Christ. This is expressed over and over so that there can be no misunderstanding.
 3. The consistent charge of Jesus was "Follow Me."
Matthew 16:24-25 NAU - "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."
To the Rich Young Ruler:
Matthew 19:21 NAU - "Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

4. The Christian profession is a vow to follow Christ with our whole life. To vainly take upon ourselves the name "Christian" without submitting to the Lordship of Christ is to take His name in vain. It is to make a vow without keeping it. Multitudes today profess to be followers of Christ but they are liars.
Titus 1:16 NAS - "They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed."
5. Our relationship with Christ is described as a marriage commitment. We are the Bride of Christ and He is the Bridegroom. Like in the Parable of the Ten Virgins, we are awaiting the coming of Christ when we will enjoy our glorious wedding. Until He returns we must remain pure and chaste.
Ephesians 5:27 NAU - "that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."
6. Paul wrote to the Church of Corinth:
2 Corinthians 11:2 NAU - "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin."

Conclusion:

1. So it is permissible to make vows today. But they must be made solemnly and carefully consider whether we will be able to honor them.
Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 NAU - "When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! ⁵ It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay."
2. The problem we witness all too often is vows carelessly made. People entering the marriage vow without carefully considering the weightiness or professing to follow Christ without first counting the cost.
Luke 14:26-30 NAU - "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷ "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸ "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'"
3. Vows must be made to God's glory, not as a means of bargaining with God in order to get what we want. To receive God's good gifts merely for our own pleasure is a misuse of God's gifts.
4. Vows give weight to our prayers but they do not bind God to fulfil our desire. Our heart must always be that our lives might be an instrument of praise to God's glory.