

Message #3**I Samuel 1:9-18**

I recently read an article that said a vast majority of mid-aged adults and older adults are today living in a state of depression. They feel hopeless, helpless, sad and empty. Then the article went on to say that the best way to treat depression is through medications, such as anti-depressants or psychotherapy. I read multiple articles on the same subject and not one of them said if you find yourself depressed go to God and pray.

Hannah was a very depressed woman. Year after year she made that 20 mile trip from her home to Shiloh. Year after year she traveled to the house of the LORD to worship God and year after year she was mocked because she did not have any children. She was an emotional wreck. She was sad and weeping. Yet Hannah had some real spiritual wits to her and what we discover is this:

WHEN HANNAH FOUND HERSELF TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY DEPRESSED, SHE WENT TO GOD IN PRAYER AND GOD TURNED HER DEPRESSION INTO JOY.

Hannah says to all of us that there are times when even those who love the Lord get depressed, but the key to getting out of it is prayer.

According to **verse 9**, the feasting was over and Hannah rose after eating and drinking at Shiloh. It had been another year and she was at the Tabernacle and nothing seemed to have changed.

Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the Temple of the LORD. The fact that Eli sat on a chair was a sign of honor, since most people sat on the ground. This must have been some sort of perch upon which he sat and watched the people (**i.e. 1:12**).

We know from I Samuel 4:18 that Eli was old and more than just a little overweight so it may be that he just needed to sit down. In any case, by virtue of the fact he is sitting by the doorpost would indicate that he would have a good vantage point of what was happening in the Shiloh worship area.

There are six key observations we want to make concerning this story:

OBSERVATION #1 – Hannah prayed when she was emotionally depressed. **1:10**

Notice the emotional despondency of Hannah, she was “greatly distressed” and she “wept bitterly.” The thing to see that she did when depressed was pray. This is exactly what depressed people should do. They should find some private place and go to God and pray. There will be moments in life when to get out of the depression this is what we must do. There will be no other solution to the problem.

OBSERVATION #2 – Hannah prayed and made a vow to the LORD of hosts. **1:11**

Often time's vows are made to God in the heat of something very emotional. In this case, it was a vow that promised God something if He were to grant her request. Psalm 76:11 says if you make a vow to God, you had better fulfill it. In fact, Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 5:5 that "it is better not to vow than that you should vow and not pay."

We may recall from our study of the book of Numbers that a vow could be made by a wife, but it also could be overruled by a husband (Num. 30:10-12). So if a woman made some emotional or irrational vow to God, a husband could overturn it. But a critical factor of the vow is that the husband needed to actually hear it (Num. 30:11). The fact that Hannah makes this vow silently in the Temple seems to negate that possibility.

Hannah is making this vow to the LORD and no one but her and the LORD know it.

She begins her vow by stating that she is a woman who lives life in "affliction" and she is a woman who needs God to remember her and not forget her (**1:11a**).

Now Hannah makes two promises to God as part of her vow:

Promise #1 - If God would give her a son, she would give him to be a lifelong Levite. **1:11b**

Samuel did have Levitical connections. His father Elkanah was from Levi's son Kohath (I Chron. 6:34-38). In all reality, Hannah is promising that her son will be dedicated to God as a lifelong priest.

Typically a Levite served the Lord from ages 25-50 (Num. 4:3; 8:24-26). So when Hannah promises that her son will be given to the Lord's service "all the days of his life," this is a very unique promise. She is promising God that she will give him for priestly service all the days of his life.

Promise #2 - If God would give her a son, she would make him to be a lifelong Nazarite. **1:11c**

Now typically a Nazarite vow was taken for a temporal period of time. There are only three in the Bible who were Nazarites all of their lives: Samson, John the Baptist and Samuel.

The Nazarite vow included three disciplines:

- 1) During the duration of the vow, one could not eat or drink anything with grapes ((Num. 6:4).
- 2) During the duration of the vow, one could not cut one's hair (Num. 6:5).
- 3) During the duration of the vow, one could not go near any dead body, even a relative (Num. 6:6-8).

Josephus claims that Samuel only drank water all of his life. Whether or not this is true is not known for certain, but what is known is that Hannah is promising God that she will see to it that her son is a Nazarite and a Levite for all of his life.

OBSERVATION #3 – Eli was watching Hannah pray. **1:12-14**

Verse 12 says that old Eli was watching from his chair and noticed Hannah was moving her mouth. What she was doing was praying. Now it is quite obvious from his response that things were so corrupt in Israel at the time that he actually thought she had shown up drunk. People brought their drink offerings to offer to the Lord and they drank some of it and apparently sometimes some of the people drank a little too much.

It was apparently common for the people to come to the temple drunk, but it was uncommon for the people to come to the Temple area to quietly and privately pray. By the response of Eli, we may assume that it was normal to see people drunk at worship; it was not normal to see people praying to God at worship.

According to **verse 13**, Hannah had just been praying out of her heart and moving her lips, but not speaking out audibly.

I love something John Bunyan said, “In prayer it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart.”

Frankly, I don’t think we are too far removed from this today. No longer is a sanctuary considered to be a place dedicated to prayer and ministry of the Word of God. The sanctuary is anything but that in many places. It isn’t the norm anymore to find people quietly sitting in an auditorium preparing to worship God.

Well, when Eli saw this, he went to Hannah and said how long are you going to sit there drunk? He said put away your wine from you.

OBSERVATION #4 – Hannah responds to Eli. **1:15-16**

Now there are six verbal responses that Hannah communicates to Eli:

Verbal Response #1 - Hannah said no my lord. **1:15a**

This is important to see. Hannah is very respectful of the leadership. She is not drunk and she says that “no,” but she also is a humble woman who respects Eli’s position.

There are times when one needs to speak up for the truth and this was one of those times. It is being alleged that she is drunk and she respectfully defends herself and says, “No I am not.”

Verbal Response #2 - Hannah said I am a woman oppressed in spirit. **1:15b**

The word “oppressed” is one that means to be very heavy in spirit (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 746). Hannah had a very heavy heart.

Verbal Response #3 - Hannah said I have neither drank wine nor any strong drink. **1:15c**

Wine refers to an alcoholic drink made from grapes through fermentation and strong drink refers to an alcoholic drink made from grapes that comes through distillation. Today wine is called wine and strong drink is called cognac or brandy.

Verbal Response #4 - Hannah said I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. **1:15d**

The idea of pouring out ones soul to God is the idea of earnestly and fervently praying out of a deep burden. Hannah says, “I am not drunk, I have been talking to God.

Verbal Response #5 - Hannah said do not consider me to be a worthless woman. **1:16a**

Quite frankly the ones Eli should have thought were worthless were his own sons. God saw them as totally and completely worthless (**2:12**). In fact, they were priests who “did not know the LORD” (**2:12**). The word “worthless” is the same used of Eli’s sons.

The words “worthless woman” are words in Hebrew that read “daughter of Belial.” The word Belial is a word that means of no value or one worthless or useless because of a lawless, ungodly, wicked, vile life (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 122). In fact, this word is actually used by Paul in regard to Satan (II Cor. 6:15). Hannah did not want Eli thinking she was a vile, useless, satanic woman of no value.

There is no question that in both the O.T. and the N.T. a woman can be of great value or worthless in the mind of God (I Pet. 3:4).

Hannah obviously believed that if someone showed up drunk at a worship service, it was an evil and vile thing.

Verbal Response #6 - I have been speaking out of great concern and provocation. **1:16b**

The adjective “great” means she had been speaking to God about something that was major. This was a great, large, vast matter. This was no light matter to Hannah (*Ibid.*, p. 753).

The actual word “concern” means to quarrel (*Ibid.*, p. 789). The word “provocation” speaks of being totally grieved to the point of great irritation and even anger (*Ibid.*, p. 409).

Hannah was pouring out her heart to God. She was open and honest with God about her frustrations and hurts which were at a great level. She was angry that every year she had to endure the humiliation of not having a child.

OBSERVATION #5 – Eli responds to Hannah. 1:17

Eli listened to Hannah and said, “go in peace and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him.”

There is no question that during this period a leader and priest like Eli did have the authority of God on him.

OBSERVATION #6 – Hannah responds to Eli. 1:18

Hannah was concerned that she find favor in the sight of Eli, so she left and ate and her face was no longer sad.

She was no longer depressed. What was it that brought her out of her depression? She was a woman who prayed and God was going to answer her prayer.

When we find ourselves in difficult situations and dark circumstances, we need to learn Hannah’s lesson—we need to pray. We need to fervently and earnestly pray.

PRACTICAL THOUGHTS:

- 1. We must not make judgments based on appearance, but on fact.**
- 2. When we are depressed, we need to continue to go to worship.**
- 3. When we are depressed, we need to pray.**
- 4. When you are godly, sometimes people will misinterpret you and misjudge you.**
- 5. It is very sad when people no longer gather in the sanctuary before worship to quietly pray.**