

Week of May 20, 2012
A Legacy of Hope

Passage Outline:

1. The Rest of the Story - 1 Samuel 12:23-24
2. Flashback: A Prayer of Desperation - 1 Samuel 1:10-20
3. A Promise Fulfilled - 1 Samuel 1:27–2:1

What's This About?

It's about Hannah's prayer for a son and what her example teaches us about passing on a legacy of faith to her child.

How Can This Impact Your Life?

This can help you place your hope in God and pass that hope on to others, especially those of your own family.

1. The Rest of the Story - 1 Samuel 12:23-24

1 Samuel 12:23-24

²³ As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. ²⁴ But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.

- A. Samuel stands a towering figure in Israel's history, serving a dual role as judge and prophet.
- i. He was the last judge of Israel in a long line judges before him, that brought the Will and Purpose of God to Israel.
 - ii. As prophet, he reluctantly helped the nation transition to a traditional monarchy (1 Sam. 8:5-9). Then as a prophet he was in the often uneasy position of having the divine authority to call the king to obedience to God's will.

Please read the articles "Samuel: A Biography" and "The Life Situation of Samuel" contained in the preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you missed it, additional copies are on the back table.

- B. The verses for this section are from Samuel's final period of ministry and are part of his closing address to the people.
- C. While he is frustrated with the people insisting on having a king, this will not prevent him from fulfilling his calling, to pray for people.
- D. Working among God's people is always a mixture of celebration and disappointment. Nowhere in the Bible do we find a group of people who perfectly fulfilled the Lord's will. Thus their leaders, whether kings or prophets or even Jesus Himself, felt this frustration.
- E. A commitment to continued prayer is always appropriate, regardless the level of frustration. Samuel went so far as to characterize a lack of prayer as a "sin against the LORD."
- F. Samuel also committed himself to "teach the good and right way."
- G. Like Samuel, I am not responsible for the spiritual condition of other people. What I am responsible for is to prepare, study, and present the truth of God's Word as faithfully as I can.
- i. The temptation is to view the attendance numbers as a judgment of my effectiveness;

- A. Samuel's story begins with desperation: his mother, Hannah, had long wanted a baby but remained childless. Because "the LORD had kept her from conceiving" (1:5). Taunted and provoked by another of her husband's wives, Hannah was deeply hurt.

Please read the article "Barrenness in the Ancient Near East" contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you missed it, additional copies are on the back table.

- B. The main point of the story is Hannah's response in a desperate situation: she prayed to the LORD:
- i. She did not give up hope, but refocused and strengthened her hope in God.
 - ii. Too often in desperate situations, people run away from God, and to what? The alternative to hoping in God is no hope. Is that really a good option?
- C. Hannah's prayer consisted of a vow to the LORD, that if she received a child, Hannah would give him to the LORD all the days of his life.
- i. This dedication of the child constituted a Nazirite vow, a description of which is in Numbers 6:1-21.
 - ii. The Nazirite vow meant that a child was especially separated and dedicated to the Lord.
- D. Hannah's prayer was not a bargaining session with God. Rather it reflects Hannah's desire to have a child and especially to have a child committed to the Lord for life.
- i. In prayer we do not need to convince God or try to change His reluctance. Some of Jesus' greatest teachings emphasized God's willingness to help, comfort, and guide (see Matt. 7:7-11).
 - ii. God loves for His children to bring their needs to Him and delights in meeting our greatest needs according to His will.
- E. The priest, Eli, misinterpreted Hannah's desperate, silent prayer as a sign of drunkenness.
- F. Hannah's very touching reply was that she was a woman with a broken heart. She was honest in her prayers, and honest about her feelings.
- G. I believe God appreciates candor. We can hide nothing from Him in the first place, but in openly admitting our despair and struggles, even resentment at not getting our way, we invite God to work on us at the deepest level. He enters our lives and transforms us as He has promised.
- H. Eli blessed her by telling her to go in peace and adding his support for the petition you've requested from Him. As a result, Hannah's hope soared before she conceived the child.

Hope: It's Meaning and Purpose

Hope serves to fill-in the gaps between our desire for blessing and the actual blessing itself. Hannah had prayed and knew that God heard her. We can have that same confidence! Confidence in God's strength to provide and His grace to provide is the substance of hope.

But hope does not come out of a vacuum; it is nurtured by a community that includes our personal family and our church family. Think about a family member or church member who is struggling with a heart-breaking situation at this time. How can you help to provide hope? How can you pray for that person? More importantly, will you pray for that person? Will you let that person know you are praying for them?

3. A Promise Fulfilled - 1 Samuel 1:27–2:1

1 Samuel 1:27-28; 2:1

²⁷ I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. ²⁸ So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there. ¹ Then Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.

- A. After the baby was weaned, Hannah fulfilled her promise by presenting Samuel to Eli. She reminded Eli that she had prayed for this boy and that Samuel was conceived and nurtured in prayer.
- B. God's faithfulness was demonstrated by giving the child to Hannah. Hannah demonstrated her faithfulness by giving the boy back to the LORD.
- C. Our commitments can confirm and deepen faith, but only to the extent that we follow through on those commitments.
 - i. Such a commitment is like taking a step further in faith that brings us closer to God Himself.
 - ii. Though such commitments are made to God, they actually do us good.
- D. Hannah's words are both tender and strong.
 - i. They are tender because we know the depth of love she had for this baby.
 - ii. They are also strong in her unreserved commitment, "For as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD." Samuel was perpetually given to the LORD.
- E. I am very sure the hopeful prayers of my father and mother set me on a spiritual trajectory that has led to my present calling. Pastor Jim will share the particulars of his personal story.

Your Daily Hope in God

As a review for you, how would you rate your own level of hope in God on a daily basis?

-----0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----
I struggle with fear! I try to hope but it's hard! My hope depends on my situation! I am placing my trust in God!

Biblical Truths in Focus

1. We honor God and help others by continuing to pray for the people entrusted to us.
2. We demonstrate and deepen our faith by continuing to hope in God even during difficult situations.
3. Parents' greatest desire should be to see their children committed to the Lord for their entire lives.
4. We experience God's full blessing by following through on the commitments we make to the Lord.