

1st Samuel

Lesson 4

(b) For the LORD's Salvation (2:1b)

Hannah begins her prayer with praise for the LORD's salvation. Chapter 2, verse 1.

*"My heart exults in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD,
My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies Because I rejoice in Your salvation."* (2:1b)

What does the word "*exalt*" mean? From the early 15th century, when this word was used in the first translation, it meant "to elevate in rank or honor;" or to "glorify, praise, extol." With the birth of Samuel, Hannah felt like she had been elevated in rank and honor. She surely had been elevated, at least in her mind. We must remember how lowly she felt compared to Peninnah, her husband's second wife, who had been able to give his many children. Hannah was finally on Peninnah's level.

What does the word "*horn*" mean? It means to be lifted up in power. An example would be the strongest of the mighty horned animals that rule the forests. In this case, Hannah is denoting an increase of might and dignity. She is a stronger person because of the LORD.

When she says, "*My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies*," Hannah is telling us that because the LORD's answer to her prayers for a son, she can now defend herself against those who would seek to keep her in a lowly position among the family of Elkanah. Previously she wept each time she visited the Tabernacle with her family. Not so any longer. Now she will rejoice because the LORD has brought her salvation from her previous status.

What does the word "*salvation*" mean in her prayer? The best definition is found in the word *deliverance*. Hannah had been delivered from her lowly state in the family.

(c) For the LORD's Steadfastness (2:2)

Then, Hannah expresses her praise for the LORD's steadfastness. Verse 2.

*"There is no one holy like the LORD; indeed, there is no one besides You,
Nor is there any rock like our God."* (2:2)

Hannah sees the LORD as being holy. What does that mean? In this case, the word means *to be preserved whole or intact and cannot be transgressed or violated*. Hannah is right. No one is whole like the LORD. No one can transgress the LORD. No one can violate the LORD. As she continues to say, "*Indeed, there is no one besides You....*" When the word *besides* in Old English meant *by the side of*. With that definition, the context is correct to say that no one can stand in an equal of power and majesty by God. However, by the time of Middle English, when this word was placed in the first English translations, it meant *outside oneself*. Fortunately, that definition fits also. No other God exists anywhere. He is the only God. Unfortunately, the current definition for *besides* includes the possibility of others, but we cannot reconcile that with Hannah's intent because God is the only God.

She praises God because He is a *rock*. We first find this concept of God in Moses' song found in Deuteronomy 32. It is Moses' metaphor to explain the LORD's strength, faithfulness, and unchangeableness in His ability to deliver the people of God. No one else is that strong, no, not one.

(d) For the LORD's Sovereign (2:3)

Hannah continues to give praise for the LORD's sovereign. Verse 3.

*“Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth;
For the LORD is a God of knowledge, And with Him actions are weighed.” (2:3)*

What has Hannah done in this verse? She has checked herself. She has admitted that she might have a little too much pride in her new position as the mother of Samuel. She has admitted that she might be a little arrogant with her mouth. She had gone from the private prayers in her lowly position by the post of the Tabernacle door to this feeling that she had been exalted. She had been exalted. But, she knows she cannot think of herself more highly than she should. God knows where she is *“For the LORD is a God of knowledge....”* She needs to bring herself back down to the ground where the LORD has her and rejoice only in what is rightly hers to rejoice. If she does not bring herself back to reality, she knows that *“with Him actions are weighed.”* She knows that God sees her heart. She knows He knows what she is really feeling and thinking inside. If she puts too much self into her thought, the LORD will judge her accordingly. The LORD is to be lifted up for what He has done, not Hannah. He is sovereign, after all.

(e) For the LORD's Supremacy (2:4)

After correcting her thoughts about herself, Hannah praises the LORD's supremacy. Verse 4.

“The bows of the mighty are shattered, But the feeble gird on strength.” (2:4)

God is good. He is the one who avenges. He is the one who takes down the mighty and lifts up the weak. The *bow* was the chief weapon in the arsenal of the mighty men of war. When a mighty man was struck down in battle, his *bow* was often broken to show his defeat.

On the other hand, weakling could find strength by girding up. It is an action a person does to get ready to exert himself. Long robes were worn by the men back in those days. Before working on a project, a man would reach down and grab the hem of his robe between his legs and then pull it up and tuck it under his belt to free his legs from the restraint of the robe. So it is with the LORD. He provides a way for the weak to be strong and the strong to be weak. Hannah rightfully knew this point.

(f) For the LORD's Sustenance (2:5a)

In the same sense as the verse before, Hannah gives praise for the LORD's sustenance. Verse 5a.

“Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, But those who were hungry cease to hunger.” (2:5a)

In the LORD's divine way, the full are never full enough, and the hungry are never hungry for long. The LORD sustains the hungry just as He girds the weak and blessed Hannah in her lowliness. But those without the LORD will never have enough, neither will they be victorious.

(g) For the LORD's Solution (2:5b)

Hannah gives praise for the LORD's solution next in verse 5b.

“Even the barren gives birth to seven, But she who has many children languishes.” (2:5b)

Hannah must be poetically speaking in this part of her prayer. She came out of barrenness with only one child at this point. She does not have seven. She does not know how many children the LORD will bless her with in the future, but she picked the number seven for her prayer. *Seven* is an important number. The seventh day is the last day of a full week. The seventh year is the completion of a sabbatical cycle when all things are restored, and all debts are forgiven, all things are

made right. Hannah had been made right. But then, Mrs. Hannah must have been thinking about that other woman who had taunted her for so many years. That woman who was her husband's second wife, the one with all the kids. Surely, Peninnah was not happy with Hannah's child. Surely, Peninnah was languishing over the fact that Hannah, the lowly wife, had been exalted to her same status. Hannah was no longer despised among men for being barren. Hannah had been delivered. Later, in this book, we will find out that Hannah would have more children. Samuel would have three younger brothers and two younger sisters. The LORD would give these five children to Hannah because she gave Samuel to the LORD. It will fulfill Eli's prayer for Hannah, but we will hold off on that until we reach that passage.

(h) For the LORD's Selection

(i) In Death (2:6)

Hannah praised the LORD's selection in death, status, and integrity. First, we will look at His selection in death. Verse 6.

"The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up." (2:6)

Death and life both come from the LORD. It is a sobering thought, I know. Why did the LORD create death? I wish I knew, but He did. The LORD created it, but Adam and Eve flipped the switch to start the process. Once the switch was switched, it could not be turned off except by the LORD. He turned it off for Enoch back in Genesis. He will turn it off for Elijah several hundred years in the future from this point in the story. Then, again, one day past our time, the LORD will turn it off at the great snatching away of the Church, but it will not be turned off for anyone else, not even the LORD Himself when He came to earth to be the Savior of His creation. Nevertheless, He controls death and life. In the control of death, He sends those who reject him to *Sheol*, the place of the departed spirits of humans who once lived on earth. Some who were faithful to the LORD will go to Abraham's bosom in Sheol, a place of peaceful rest. Those who are not faithful to the LORD will go to the place of torment in Sheol, a place of constant pain. The LORD will tell us when He is on earth that the place of peaceful rest and torment has a great gulf between the two that no one can cross. Did Hannah understand this? Probably not. But she understood life and death. She understood that the LORD controlled both. She also understood that each individual person has to choose to be faithful or unfaithful to the LORD.

Hannah also says, *"He brings down to Sheol and raises up."* Before Calvary, everyone who died went to Sheol. But the faithful went to the place of peaceful rest. The unfaithful went to the place of torment. Why does she say that the LORD sends people there at death and raises them up from Sheol? Is this reincarnation? No. This is resurrection. Sheol will not be filled with people for all eternity. The righteous will be resurrected to eternal life with the LORD. The wicked will be resurrected to eternal death in the lake of fire. The two resurrections are different and occur at different times. Many hundreds of years after this story, the LORD would go to Sheol upon His death on the cross. He would enter the place of peaceful rest in Abraham's bosom. He would speak to those across the great gulf in torment. Then He would rise from the dead and take all those in Abraham's bosom with Him to heaven. Abraham's bosom is now completely empty. Torment is another story. It is still being filled. It will be emptied at the second resurrection for the Great White Throne Judgment, but that is many thousands of years in the future from this story. Hannah knew that the LORD would raise everyone from Sheol one day to be in heaven.

(ii) In Status (2:7)

Hannah praises the LORD for His selection in status. Verse 7.

“The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts.” (2:7)

This verse tells us much more than we might think. We could focus on the poor/rich and low/exalts words, but there is something much more important in what she is saying. She is thankful that in the end, the LORD makes all things with all people right. The wicked are punished. The righteous are rewarded. The lowly are raised up; the raised up are brought low. The LORD fixes the status of all based on His standard. All people will get what they deserve.

(iii) In Integrity (2:8)

Hannah continues to praise the LORD for His integrity in His selection. Verse 8.

*“He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap
To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor;
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, And He set the world on them.” (2:8)*

Hannah understood the plight of the poor. She was not poor financially; she was poor in family. In those days, the wealth of man was established as much in the number of children he had as much as the amount of silver he had. Children meant workers. Workers meant production. Production meant provisions. Provisions meant food and security. Hannah had failed her husband in providing children for him. She was poor. But the LORD had the integrity to lift her up out of the dust of her pooriness. He had the ability to rightly lift her from the *ash pile* she thought she was in. She must have thought that the birth of her son meant her status had sky-rocketed to the status of the bigwigs and the honored. Truthfully, it had, but she would have to wait for it. Samuel was just a child.

Nevertheless, the Creator of the earth had taken the time to bless her with Samuel. The earth is the LORDS. He made it; He can do with the world what He desires. He took a moment of His time to focus on Hannah and her prayer, and He answered her with a miracle – a boy.

(i) For the LORD’s Shield (2:9)

Moving on in her prayer, Hannah gives praise for the LORD’s shield. Verse 9.

*“He keeps the feet of His godly ones, But the wicked ones are silenced in darkness;
For not by might shall a man prevail.” (2:9)*

The story of Job had long been over by the time of Hannah’s life. We have to wonder if she knew about the shield of protection that the LORD puts around those who belong to Him. If she had not heard the story of Job, enough had happened in the last three hundred years since her nation left Egypt that she could have come to this conclusion on her own. The record was plain. The LORD does shield the godly and silence the wicked, and no man can prevail against the LORD in any circumstance.