

## What Is Prayer?

First Samuel 1.1–2.11

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • November 16, In the year of our Lord, 2014  
Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – Songs on prayer

### Prelude:

**I. [Have one of the young boys come to hold items]**

**II. This is not prayer (pouring some water from a pitcher into a glass)**

A. This is not prayer (pouring some water from a pitcher into two glasses)

B. Nor is this prayer (pouring some water from a pitcher into smaller pitcher)

**III. This is prayer (pouring all the water from the pitcher into a bucket)**

A. What did I just do?

B. I held nothing back.

1. I poured out all the water from my pitcher

2. into a bucket that was larger than my pitcher.

**IV. Let me show you now from First Samuel**

A. prayer in the life of a woman named Hannah.

B. Watch how she

1. conducts herself in prayer,

2. how she backs up her prayer with her life, and

3. how she pours out something before the Lord.

### Persuasion:

**I. First Samuel 1.1–5 – The Man Elkanah**

**1** Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. **2** And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. **3** This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there. **4** And whenever the

time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. 5 But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb.

- A. This man came from the mountains of Ephraim.
- B. He had two wives.
  - 1. He blessed one wife and her children.
  - 2. He blessed the childless wife with a double portion.
    - a) Love moved him.
    - b) However, the Lord closed her womb.

## II. First Samuel 1.6–8 – The Provoking of a Rival

6 And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb. 7 So it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat. 8 Then Elkanah her husband said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?”

- A. Although the Lord had closed her womb,
  - 1. Hannah loved the Lord,
  - 2. making an annual trip to Shiloh to the house or tabernacle of the Lord.
- B. However, her co-wife became her rival,
  - 1. provoking her,
  - 2. putting her down because she could not have children.
- C. This grieved Hannah, and
  - 1. she would not eat, and
  - 2. that grieved her husband,
    - a) who loved her, but who also took it personally,
    - b) moving him to question her love for him.

### III. First Samuel 1.9–11 – Hannah Held Nothing Back

9 So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the Lord. 10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. 11 Then she made a vow and said, “O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.”

A. When the rest of the family finished eating,

1. she went to the tabernacle to pray.
2. While there, Eli the priest sat by the entrance.

B. Here is prayer.

1. First, she brought the bitterness of her soul to the Lord.
2. Second, she wept in prayer because of her anguish.
  - a) If we cannot pray to the Lord when life throws bitterness at us,
  - b) when can we pray?
    - (1) Should we cry because of the anguish of our souls?
    - (2) Who created us with the ability to weep?
3. Third, she promised to do something for the Lord.
  - a) We want *from* Him,
  - b) do we think of giving *to* Him?

C. Remember the pitcher full of water and all of it going into the bucket.

### IV. First Samuel 1.12–18 – Hannah Poured Out Her Soul

12 And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth. 13 Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. 14 So Eli said to her, “How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!” 15 But Hannah answered and said, “No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out

**my soul before the Lord. 16 Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now.” 17 Then Eli answered and said, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him.” 18 And she said, “Let your maidservant find favor in your sight.” So the woman went her way and ate, and *her face was no longer sad.***

A. Some misunderstand prayer, vows, and other parts of religion.

1. Do not become impatient with them, but
2. explain things and show respect as Hannah did.

B. Listen to Hannah on prayer.

1. First, it is going to the Lord when you have a sorrowful spirit.
2. Second, *she poured out her soul* before the Lord.
3. Third, the abundance of her complaint and grief moved her to seek God.
4. Fourth,
  - a) after telling someone about her prayer and
  - b) after pouring out her soul to the Lord
    - (1) she no longer had
      - (a) bitterness,
      - (b) anguish,
      - (c) affliction,
      - (d) complaints, or
      - (e) grief.
    - (2) She poured those things out of her pitcher into the Lord’s bucket.

C. [Have the boy return]

1. [Pour the water from the bucket back into the pitcher]
2. [Have him hold the pitcher until he cannot do it anymore]
  - a) [Then take it from him, showing how much easier it is for me]

b) [However, I will get tired also, but God...never]

D. Why then do we continue to walk around with full pitchers?

## V. First Samuel 1.19–20 – The Lord and Hannah

**19 Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. 20 So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked for him from the Lord."**

A. Finally, Hannah had a child;

1. she even had a boy, for
2. that is what she asked.

B. She promised that he would be a Nazarite.

1. This is the background for why the Lord gave us
2. one of the greatest men who has ever lived!

C. The Lord remembered Hannah, and

1. Hannah remembered the Lord,
2. honoring Him with the naming of her son.
  - a) "El" at the end of his name and the names of others
  - b) refers to one of God's Hebrew names.

(1) Samuel's name means "heard of God."

(2) When she called for him, she was saying, "Heard of God."

(a) This woman meant what she said in prayer.

(b) She lived her prayers.

## VI. First Samuel 1.21–25 – Hannah Kept Her Promise

**21 Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow. 22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "Not until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the Lord and remain there forever." 23 So Elkanah her husband**

said to her, “Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him. Only let the Lord establish His word.” Then the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him. 24 Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young. 25 Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli.

- A. She did not pray for the short term, but
  - 1. for the long term.
  - 2. She knew that what you say in prayer is for all time.
- B. As the mother, she had to wean Samuel, then
  - 1. the boy belonged to the Lord forever.
  - 2. She wanted him so desperately, but
    - a) she saw that the Lord kept His word.
    - b) Therefore, she kept her word.
- C. Prayer is
  - 1. expecting God to keep His word and
  - 2. expecting yourself to keep your word.

## VII. First Samuel 1.26–28 – The Lord Gave, Hannah Gave

26 And she said [to Eli], “O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the Lord. 27 For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. 28 Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord.” So they worshiped the Lord there.

- A. This woman believed that the Lord was her everything.
  - 1. Her life was wrapped up in the Lord.
  - 2. Therefore, she poured out her soul to the Lord.
- B. Since the Lord poured out a blessing for her,
  - 1. she poured out that blessing back to the Lord.

2. And she appeared to have no regrets about it.

C. Prayer is meaning what you say and saying what you mean.

### VIII. First Samuel 2.1–10 – The Prayer of a Poured-Out Soul

1 And Hannah prayed and said:

- “My heart rejoices in the Lord;  
My horn is exalted in the Lord.  
I smile at my enemies,  
Because I rejoice in Your salvation.
- 2 No one is holy like the Lord,  
For there is none besides You,  
Nor is there any rock like our God.
- 3 Talk no more so very proudly;  
Let no arrogance come from your mouth,  
For the Lord is the God of knowledge;  
And by Him actions are weighed.
- 4 The bows of the mighty men are broken,  
And those who stumbled are girded with strength.
- 5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,  
And the hungry have ceased to hunger.  
Even the barren has borne seven,  
And she who has many children has become feeble.
- 6 The Lord kills and makes alive;  
He brings down to the grave and brings up.
- 7 The Lord makes poor and makes rich;  
He brings low and lifts up.
- 8 He raises the poor from the dust  
And lifts the beggar from the ash heap,  
To set them among princes  
And make them inherit the throne of glory.  
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s,  
And He has set the world upon them.
- 9 He will guard the feet of His saints,  
But the wicked shall be silent in darkness.  
For by strength no man shall prevail.
- 10 The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces;  
From heaven He will thunder against them.  
The Lord will judge the ends of the earth.  
He will give strength to His king,

**And exalt the horn of His anointed.”**

- A. Prayer is not believing in yourself,
  - 1. it is believing in the Lord.
  - 2. Therefore, almost every sentence of this prayer spoke of the Lord.
- B. She was an educated woman.
  - 1. Yet, in prayer she glorified not herself, but the Lord.
  - 2. She focused her life on the Lord.
- C. This prayer shows that she poured out her soul again.
  - 1. It must be that the prayer for a male child
  - 2. was not
    - a) the only time,
    - b) the first time, or
    - c) the last time
      - (1) that she poured out her soul before the Lord.
      - (2) And what did the Lord give,
        - (a) not only to this woman, but
        - (b) to the whole world through this woman?
          - i) Samuel, the last judge,
          - ii) who also anointed the first two kings of Israel, and
            - (1) the second of those two,
            - (2) the greatest king the world has ever known,
              - (a) whom the Lord used
              - (b) as a type of the Messiah.

**IX. First Samuel 2.11 – Life Continued**

**11 Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah. But the child ministered to the**



## Lord before Eli the priest.

A. God bless Elkanah.

1. He supported his wife 100%.
2. They worshiped the Lord together.

B. He also gave up his son.

1. You know that he loved Samuel
2. as much as his other children, but
  - a) he honored the godly life of his wife.
  - b) Therefore, their son ministered to the Lord Himself.

## **Exhortation:**

### **I. You have seen**

- A. that in prayer you must pour out your soul before the Lord,
- B. that whatever sorrows fill your soul, you can give to the Lord,
- C. that He will grant your requests,
- D. that He expects you to honor your promises, and
- E. that you may bless the world in ways you never imagined.

### **II. However, a poured-out soul in prayer**

- A. comes from a poured-out life before the Lord.
- B. Such prayers flow naturally from such a life.

### **III. Jesus of Nazareth is the Lord.**

- A. Pour out your life to Him.
- B. That will take you away from your sin.
  1. It will lead you to the waters of baptism,
  2. where He will wash away your past life.

### **IV. Do not hold anything back, or He will hold back the blessings.**