

Series: Biblical Heroes and Zeros – week 15

CDOBC – beginning (*Resuming*) on 11/6/11

Title: “Hannah”

November 27, 2011

1 Samuel 1-2

OBJECTIVE: To help us remain faithful and give thanks to God – even during difficult times.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Church Directory
- Dessert & Carol Night – 12/4 – 6 p.m.
- Waypoint Theatre Co. – “Away With the Manger” – see bulletin for description and details
- Share the Good News of Christmas! Invitation packets – take as many as you need!

Today, we are continuing our study of “Biblical Heroes and Zeros”.

Romans 15:4

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

We have looked at 14 other heroes and zeros in part 1 & 2 of this series, and today we are looking at a Biblical Hero – Hannah (next week will be Abimelech).

Turn to 1 Samuel

Hannah was faithful in difficulties 1:1-8 (*Read Passage*)

As the book of 1 Samuel begins, we are introduced to a dysfunctional family. Elkanah is the husband, and he has two wives. Hannah is mentioned first, which tells us she was his first wife. Peninnah (Pē-ninā) was his second wife. We are told in vs. 2 that “...Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.” This is probably why Elkanah took a second wife. In the ancient world, the large majority of men had one wife.

However, some men of wealth took multiple wives – especially if their first wife was barren.

We see Hannah’s faithfulness in the family’s regular pattern of worship. “Year after year” (vs. 3) the family packed the minivan, and made the trip to Shiloh. At this time in Israel’s history, the Ark of the Covenant was kept at the Tabernacle in Shiloh, where Eli was the High Priest, and this was a popular destination for worship.

Elkanah favored Hannah over Peninnah, which did not help the family dynamics. By flaunting his preference for Hannah, he would have caused great heartache to Peninnah, and the seeds for dysfunction were not only sown, but watered and fertilized. Hannah was the target of Peninnah’s attacks, and she knew right where to strike Hannah – on the issue of her barrenness. These attacks hurt Hannah so deeply that she would sob and lose her appetite. What was supposed to be a family celebration as they worshiped at Shiloh, would become a time of sorrow, misery, envy, and strife in the family.

In vs. 8, Elkanah does not help the reputation of us men. In perhaps one of the most unenlightened statements ever made in a marriage, he asks Hannah:

“Why are you weeping?

Why don’t you eat?

Why are you downhearted?

Don’t I mean more to you than ten sons?”

NO!

Men...your wife needs more out of life than the privilege of being married to you! Some of you may be a one in a million

‘catch’ – you may even be loved by your mother-in-law – but you are not the sole focus and satisfaction of your wife’s life-long dreams!

I believe that Hannah loved Elkanah very much, but she was barren – and in that culture, her barren state spoke of God’s hand against her. In fact, it’s stated 2x in the first 8 verses (vs. 5 &6) that it was God who had closed Hannah’s womb!

Deut. 28:1-4 “If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all His commands I give you today...The fruit of your womb will be blessed...”

Psalm 127:3 “Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from Him.”

Psalm 128:3 “Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table.”

This was of great concern to Hannah, because her highest priority was to please God and to be blessed by Him. But her barren condition revealed to her that God was withholding His blessing from her!

Hannah wanted to honor God – and honor her husband via children. In the context of O.T. era, children were a sign of God’s blessings – and since she was a faithful follower of God, the lack of children presented a great crisis for her.

However, she faithfully worshiped year after year, even though God had closed her womb.

Problems led Hannah to prayer 1:9-18

So often, when the circumstances of our life bring great amounts of pain and difficulty, we get angry at God. We get angry because we believe He is sovereign, so why doesn’t He

prevent the things that cause us so much pain? To us, it feels like God doesn't care, or that He has given us empty promises. Hannah was hurt, angry, vs. 10 describes her condition as in "bitterness of soul".

Instead of anger toward God – instead of turning her back on God – she prayed to God through her tears (vs. 10).

"LORD Almighty" is a term that emphasizes the sovereignty of God and His unlimited power. She knew that God's hand of blessing could reverse her barren condition – and she appeals to the greatness and power of God in her prayer.

She wanted children to honor Elkanah and God.

Hannah knew that Elkanah would love to have children through her. She knew his love for her, and I believe that her desire to have a son was a desire to give Elkanah a son. This doesn't mean the rivalry between her and Peninnah was not ever a thought in her mind, but it means that it wasn't her primary motive. She had faith that God would honor her if she poured her heart to Him through prayer, which He did in the birth of her first son, Samuel.

Proof that her highest priority was to honor God is seen in her vow – to give her firstborn son to God for a life of service in the Tabernacle.

Hannah's song/prayer: 2:1-10

Hannah is known not only as Samuel's mother, but for her great prayer in response to God's blessing on her life. Like the song of

Moses and Miriam (Exod 15:1-18, 21); the Song of Moses (Deut 32:1-43); the Song of Deborah (Judg 5); and esp. the Song of David (2 Sam 22).

Her ‘song’ – ‘speech’ – prayer – is a declaration of her faith in God and a description of His character and ability. In the song, she expresses her joy in God, the uniqueness of God, that God knows the heart of man and is not fooled by appearances, and that God is the Creator, protector, and judge of all things.

The joy and uniqueness of God vs. 1-2 (*Read passage*)

“Then” (vs. 1) connects this song with the giving of Samuel to the Lord. Dedicating Samuel was probably done in some sort of ceremony / service, and was no doubt a time of celebration, and of sorrow.

Her rejoicing is in contrast to her sad heart and troubled spirit in 1:8, 15.

Throughout this song, we see hints of rebuttal toward Peninnah and her ridicule toward Hannah that she suffered for years.

The joyful boasting Hannah refers to was not a boasting in her own ability, but in God’s ability. (His deliverance of her in vs. 1b)

1 Cor. 1:31 “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

In vs. 2 she honors the holiness, uniqueness, and the dependability of God. He is like a rock that cannot be moved! We can anchor our lives – and our hopes in Him!

God knows a person’s heart vs. 3-8a

God sees through the veneer of our lives!

(Read passage)

After years of being looked upon by others as being under the judgment of God, Hannah knows that the truth wins out in the end. God had indeed closed her womb, but it was not due to His judgment of her, but simply due to His providential timing. Everyone else saw the outside – no children, and assumed the worst. But God knew Hannah’s heart and her obedience.

She contrasts the things that the world exalts:

The warrior with those who stumble

Those full of food with the hungry

The childless with the woman who has many sons

With each example, she helps us realize that God cannot be judged – and a person cannot be judged by mere appearances. Faithfulness and obedience are deeper issues. You cannot simply look on the surface of someone’s life and see the whole story!

What appears to be God’s blessing and approval, and what appears to be His judgment are not always visible to our eyes.

Matt. 5:45 “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Be careful not to judge people or God by mere appearances for they do not always tell the whole story!

God is the Creator vs. 8b

"For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's; upon them He has set the world.

Hannah’s confidence in God – and our confidence in God is primarily in His person – His character – but we can also look

to His mighty works – and what could be more ‘mighty’ than creation?!

Because He is the Creator, we can trust His plan – even when it doesn’t make sense to us – even when the timing seems all wrong – we can trust Him, because He is the One who created it all! He is the one who is in control of it all!

God is our protector and judge vs. 9-10

Human strength, human ability, and human authority is not forever. Evil may have its prosperous times, but in the end, God will shatter those who oppose Him.

He will “thunder against them from heaven” and He will judge every thought and deed from one end of the earth to the other!

Vs. 10 has Messianic overtones – Jesus will be the King who will rule the nations – and He will be exalted above all others.

Phil. 2:9-11

“Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Application

Stay faithful during difficult times.

Hannah stayed faithful...year after year she continued to faithfully worship with her family – even though the family was causing her great anguish and “bitterness of soul”. In the midst of great difficulties in our life, one of

our tendencies is to withdraw from others – and to withdraw from Sunday worship. This is not the solution to our problems, but it does take us away from the solution! Remember, the solution is not always something that takes away the pain – sometimes the pain cannot be taken away! But the solution is to trust in God and the people He has provided to support us through the difficulties of life.

Stay thankful during difficult times.

Part of worship is to give thanks to God. Hannah and her family would have brought ‘thank offerings’ to Shiloh. In the midst of painful and difficult times, thanksgiving is not a natural response or a natural feeling. At times like this, your ‘thanksgiving’ may feel ‘forced’ or mechanical – and that’s all right. Normally, doing the right thing requires us to go against our natural tendency or inclination – and this is no different.

Give thanks to God for His unique and holy character, for His ability to know the truth and see beneath the surface of things, and for His power and justice. Give thanks.

Stay confident during difficult times.

If you are a Christian, you are a child of the King! You will be blessed for all eternity!

Be confident that even when the evil and wicked prosper in the moment – even when they prosper over an extended time, that God will bring justice. Eternity will

not tolerate injustice and every wrong will be judged and
righteousness will triumph!

Stay confident – God is in control – He will “thunder”
against all evil!

Close in prayer