

FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 2

Hannah's Prayer

And Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. 2 “There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God. 3 Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. 4 The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. 5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. 6 The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. 7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. 8 He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world. 9 “He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. 10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.” 11 Then Elkanah went home to Ramah. And the boy was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli the priest.

2:1 *prayed.* Hannah's prayer is a song of praise and thanksgiving to God (see Ps 72:20, where the psalms of David are designated “prayers”). This song has sometimes been termed the “Magnificat of the OT” because it is so similar to the Magnificat of the NT (Mary's song, Lk 1:46–55). It also has certain resemblances to the “Benedictus” (the song of Zechariah, Lk 1:67–79). Hannah's song of praise finds many echoes in David's song near the end of the book (2Sa 22). These two songs frame the main narrative, and their themes highlight the ways of God that the narrative relates—they contain the theology of the book in the form of praise. Hannah speaks prophetically at a time when Israel is about to enter an important new period of her history with the establishment of kingship through her son, Samuel. To reject Baptism is to reject Christ Himself. The Christian Church is by Christ commanded to baptize and it has no right to discontinue this Sacrament. (CSB)

Prayer includes all forms of communication with God and takes the form of thanksgiving, praise, confession, meditation, contemplation, or intercession. Hannah's prayer gives the doctrine of 1 and 2Sm in themes: we do not prevail through might; God exercises judgment through the king; God lifts up the humble; and God works through the “little.” Hannah's song is similar to David's song (2Sm 22) and parallels Mary's song (Lk 1:46–55) (TL SB)

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I rejoice in your salvation. The supreme source of Hannah's joy is not in the child, but in the God who has answered her prayer. (CSB)

2:2 *Rock.* A metaphor to depict the strength and stability of the God of Israel as the unfailing source of security for his people (see 2Sa 22:32; Dt 32:4, 31; Ps 18:31; Isa 30:29; 44:8). (CSB)

2:3–5 Hannah appears first of all to be addressing Peninnah, who had previously provoked Hannah for her barrenness (1:6–7). Hannah's song also speaks to those who take pride in their own strength and mock those whom God has chosen in their weakness. Cypr: “Hannah, barren, from whom is born Samuel ...

according to the mercy and promise of God, [conceived] when she had prayed in the temple; and Samuel being born, was a type of Christ” (ANF 5:513). (TLSB)

2:3 *so proudly ... such arrogance.* After the manner of Peninnah (and others in the narratives of 1,2 Samuel—Eli’s sons, the Philistines, Saul, Nabal, Goliath, Absalom, Shimei and Sheba). (CSB)

the LORD is a God of knowledge. See 16:7; 1Ki 8:39; Ps 139:1–6. (CSB)

2:4–5 In a series of examples derived from everyday life Hannah shows that God often works contrary to natural expectations and brings about surprising reversals—seen frequently in the stories that follow. (CSB)

2:6–8 Hannah declares that life and death, prosperity and adversity, are determined by the sovereign power of God—another theme richly illustrated in the following narrative (see Dt 32:39; 1Ki 17:20–24; 2Ki 4:32–35; Jn 5:21; 11:41–44). (CSB)

2:6 *The LORD kills and brings to life.* The Lord desires to save all people, no matter how sinful they are (Ezk 33:10–11). Hannah acknowledges that life and death are in God’s hands and that God has power to humble and exalt (1Pt 5:5–6). “Contrition is contained in the first clause, and how we are revived in contrition is clearly described in the second. We are revived by God’s Word, which offers grace. This sustains and enlivens hearts” (Ap XIIA 49–50). Ter: “It is by death that He kills, it is by the resurrection that He will make alive” (ANF 3:565). Luth: “These works He performs through the two ministries [of the Law and of grace]: the first by the letter, the second by the Spirit. The effect of the letter is such that because of His wrath no one can continue to exist; that of the Spirit is such that because of His grace no one can perish. Ah, this matter is so preciously profound that it deserves to be spoken of constantly” (WLS § 2284). Luth: “This we must learn ... to console such people and explain these temptations as instances of the peculiar ways, so to speak, in which God is wont to contend with His own in the guise of a destroyer. Then we can exhort them to hold fast to the promise, or the light and spark of the Word, in the hope that liberation will certainly follow” (WLS § 33) (TLSB)

2:8 *pillars of the earth.* A common figure in the OT for the solid base on which the earth (the dry land on which man lives, not planet earth; Ge 1:10) is founded. The phrase does not teach a particular theory of the structure of the universe (see Job 9:6; 38:6; Ps 75:3; 104:5; Zec 12:1). (CSB)

2:9 *guard the feet.* Travel in ancient Israel was for the most part by foot over trails that were often rocky and dangerous (see Ps 91:11–12; 121:3). (CSB)

faithful ones. People who are faithful to the Lord. The Hebrew root underlying this word is used of both God and his people in 2Sa 22:26 (see also Ps 18:25) to characterize the nature of their mutual relationship. The word is also translated “godly” (Ps 12:1; 32:6) and “faithful ones” (Pr 2:8). (CSB)

2:10 *judge.* Impose his righteous rule upon (see Ps 96:13; 98:9). (CSB)

ends of the earth. All nations and peoples (see Dt 33:17; Isa 45:22). (CSB)

give strength to His king. At the time, there was no king in Israel. Hannah’s word prophesies the time when God would give His righteous judgments through His anointed king. This was fulfilled imperfectly in the earthly kings of Israel and then perfectly in Christ Jesus. (TLSB)

his king. Hannah's prayer is here prophetic, anticipating the establishment of kingship in Israel and the initial realization of the Messianic ideal in David (Lk 1:69). Ultimately her expectation finds fulfillment in Christ and his complete triumph over the enemies of God. (CSB)

anointed. The first reference in the Bible to the Lord's anointed—i.e., his anointed king. (Priests were also anointed for God's service; see Ex 28:41; Lev 4:3.) The word is often synonymous with "king" (as here) and provides part of the vocabulary basis for the Messianic idea in the Bible. "Anointed" and "Messiah" are the translation and transliteration respectively of the same Hebrew word. The Greek translation of this Hebrew term is *Christos*, from which comes the English word "Christ." A king (coming from the tribe of Judah) is first prophesied by Jacob (Ge 49:10); kingship is further anticipated in the oracles of Balaam in Nu 24:7, 17. Also Dt 17:14–20 looks forward to the time when the Lord will place a king of his choice over his people after they enter the promised land. 1,2 Samuel shows how this expectation of the theocratic king is realized in the person of David. Hannah's prophetic anticipation of a king at the time of the dedication of her son Samuel, who was to be God's agent for establishing kingship in Israel, is entirely appropriate. (CSB)

First reference in the OT to the "anointed." (TLSB)

2:11 *ministered.* Performed such services as a boy or acolyte might render while assisting the high priest. (CSB)

He served and assisted the priests in their duties, living as an apprentice to a teacher. As such, he would have lived among the families of the priests. (TLSB)

before the LORD. At the "house of the LORD" (1:24). (CSB)

2:1–11 Hannah exults that God has fulfilled His Word. Her prayer stands as a warning to us when we are tempted to trust in our own strength, beauty, wealth, or intelligence Her prayer also gives us encouragement to look to God for every good thing that we need in life, confident that He will fulfill our deepest desires in eternity through His Anointed One, Jesus Christ. • Praise to You, God of Hannah, for You delight in exalting those who humble themselves before You. Amen. (TLSB)

Eli's Worthless Sons

12 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD. 13 The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, 14 and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw." 16 And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish," he would say, "No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force." 17 Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt. 18 Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy clothed with a linen ephod. 19 And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20 Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the LORD." So then they would return to their home. 21 Indeed the LORD visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the LORD.

2:12 *did not know.* In OT usage, to “know” the Lord is not just intellectual or theoretical recognition. To know the Lord is to enter into fellowship with him and acknowledge his claims on one’s life. The term often has a covenantal connotation (see Jer 31:34; Hos 13:4, “acknowledge”). (CSB)

Since Eli’s sons served their own will and desires, they did not have the knowledge of God’s character and His purpose for their lives, which comes from trusting and surrendering to Him in an intimate relationship of faith (Rm 12:1–2). (TLSB)

2:13–16 Apparently vv. 13–14 describe the practice that had come to be accepted for determining the priests’ portion of the fellowship offerings (Lev 7:31–36; 10:14–15; Dt 18:1–5)—a tradition presumably based on the assumption that a random thrust of the fork would providentially determine a fair portion. Verses 15–16 then describe how Eli’s sons arrogantly violated that custom and the law. (CSB)

2:13–14 Eli’s sons dealt contemptuously with provisions made in the Law regarding the distribution of sacrificial offerings (Lv 7:29–36). (TLSB)

servant. Levites, and perhaps consecrated young men like Samuel, served alongside the priest (Nu 3:5–10). (TLSB)

2:15–16 In the Law, God commanded that the fat portion of the offering be burned as a way of expressing the worshiper’s desire to give the best to the Lord (Lv 3:16–17; 7:31). Eli’s sons showed contempt for God and His Law, not simply by stealing the offerings through threats of violence, but also by treating what was holy (set apart by and for God) as if it were common (simply for human use). “A priest must avoid covetousness.... They must not, that is, follow the example of the sons of Eli who lay with the women in the vestibule of the Temple and, supposing religion to consist in plunder, diverted to the gratification of their own appetites all the best parts of the [sacrificial] victims” (NPNF 2 6:148). (TLSB)

2:15 *before the fat was burned.* On the altar as the Lord’s portion, which he was to receive first (see Lev 3:16; 4:10, 26, 31, 35; 7:28, 30–31; 17:6). (CSB)

roast. Boiling is the only form of cooking specified in the law for the priests’ portion (Nu 6:19–20). Roasting this portion is nowhere expressly forbidden in the law, but it is specified only for the Passover lamb (Ex 12:8–9; Dt 16:7). The present passage seems to imply that for the priests to roast their portion of the sacrifices was unlawful. (CSB)

2:16 *by force.* Presenting the priests’ portion was to be a voluntary act on the part of the worshipers (see Lev 7:28–36; Dt 18:3). (CSB)

2:18 *Samuel.* Between 2:11 and 4:1 the author presents a series of sharp contrasts between Samuel and Eli’s sons. (CSB)

ministering. To attend or serve by fulfilling priestly duties. Term is never used of the priests at Shiloh, suggesting Samuel’s innocence in the midst of corruption. (TLSB)

linen ephod. A priestly garment worn by those who served before the Lord at his sanctuary (see 22:18; 2Sa 6:14). It was a close-fitting, sleeveless pullover, usually of hip length, and is to be distinguished from the special ephod worn by the high priest. (CSB)

Linen apron of the Levites, less rich in material and color than the vestments of the priests (Ex 28:6–14). (TLSB)

2:19 *little robe.* A sleeveless garment reaching to the knees, worn over the undergarment and under the ephod (see 15:27; 18:4). (CSB)

Royal, or priestly, robe. Hannah's persisting care is touching and lavish, since typically a person owned only one set of clothes. (TLSB)

2:21 *three sons and two daughters.* Children are a blessing from God. (TLSB)

the presence of the LORD. The ark of the covenant provided access to God's presence. (TLSB)

2:12–21 While Eli's sons abuse their priestly authority and treat with contempt both the worshipers and the sacrifices offered to God, Samuel grows in his service in the Lord's presence. Hannah and Elkanah also experience God's blessing through the ministry of Eli and receive the gift of more children. This passage encourages us that no matter how disordered things may get in our world and even in the Church, God will stand by His gracious Word of blessing. • Thank You, Lord, for Your unfailing love and faithfulness to us. Bless us in faithful service to You, to our family, and in our callings. Amen. (TLSB)

Eli Rebukes His Sons

22 Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. **23** And he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. **24** No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. **25** If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death. **26** Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man.

2:22 *kept hearing.* Apparently, Eli was slow to discipline his errant sons. (TLSB)

lay with the women who served. See Ex 38:8. There is no further reference to such women in the OT. Perhaps these women performed various menial tasks, but certainly their service is not to be confused with that of the Levites, which is prescribed in the Pentateuch (Nu 1:50; 3:6–8; 8:15; 16:9; 18:2–3). The immoral acts of Eli's sons are reminiscent of the religious prostitution (fertility rites) at the Canaanite sanctuaries (see 1Ki 14:24; 15:12; 22:46)—acts that were an abomination to the Lord and a desecration of his house (Dt 23:17–18). (CSB)

Priests and women were behaving like Canaanites. Improper treatment of sacrificial food and impure sexual conduct were linked in the code of priestly behavior (Lv 21:7–8) (TLSB)

2:23–24 Eli made some attempt to discipline his sons. But as high priest, he should have dismissed them. (TLSB)

2:23 *he said to them.* Eli rebuked his sons but did not remove them from office. God would do that. (CSB)

2:25 *God.* Eli's argument is that when someone commits an offense against another man, there is recourse to a third party to decide the issue (whether this be understood as God or as God's representatives, the judges; but when the offense is against the Lord, there is no recourse, for God is both the one wronged and the judge. (CSB)

Nu 15:30–31 speaks of defiant sin “with a high hand” not against other people, but against the Lord. The consequence of such sin was death. With repentance on the part of those who had committed such sin, priestly intercession could avert God’s wrath. Without such repentance, no atonement could be made. (TLSB)

the LORD to put them to death. This comment by the author of the narrative is not intended to excuse Eli’s sons, but to indicate that Eli’s warning was much too late. Eli’s sons had persisted in their evil ways for so long that God’s judgment on them was determined (v. 34; see Jos 11:20). (CSB)

The Lord was determined because they persisted in their evil ways. (TLSB)

2:26 *grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man.* Cf. Luke’s description of Jesus (Lk 2:52). (CSB)

Samuel is a stark contrast to Eli’s sons. Unlike them, Samuel is said to have the approval not only of God but also of human beings. See the evaluation of Jesus, Lk 2:52. Cyr: “We ought then, beloved brethren, to remember and to know, that when we call God Father, we ought to act as God’s children; so that in the measure in which we find pleasure in considering God as Father, He might also be able to find pleasure in us” (ANF 5:450). (TLSB)

2:22–26 Eli’s sons continue in their high-handed contempt for God’s Law, refusing to listen to their father’s rebuke and warning. As Eli’s sons grow in their sin, Samuel grows in favor with God and with people. God’s rebuke and warning show His desire for our repentance. When we have sinned against Him, He provides for us an intercessor, the Lord Jesus Christ. • Lord, give me ears that hear Your rebuke and a mouth that confesses Your will. Thanks be to God that in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation for us. Amen. (TLSB)

The LORD Rejects Eli’s Household

27 And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh? 28 Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. 29 Why then do you scorn[b] my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?’ 30 Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,’ but now the LORD declares: ‘Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. 31 Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. 32 Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. 33 The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. 34 And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day. 35 And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. 36 And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, “Please put me in one of the priests’ places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.”’”

2:27 *man of God.* Often a designation for a prophet (see 9:6, 10; Dt 33:1; Jos 14:6; 1Ki 13:1, 6–8; 17:18, 24; 2Ki 4:7). (CSB)

A prophet usually in the OT, the appearance of a man of God means the proclamation of God's judgment (cf 9:6, 10). Chem: "When the Levites did not do their duty, God raised up prophets from other tribes who brought them back into line" (*LTh* 2:703). (TLSB)

house of your father. The descendants of Aaron. (CSB)

2:28 *to be my priest.* Three tasks of the priests are mentioned: 1) *to go up to my altar.* To perform the sacrificial rites at the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard of the tabernacle. 2) (CSB)

Compact definition of what God expects from a priest: right application of the sacrificial blood at the altar; right consecration of offerings (including intercessory prayer for the people); and right conduct in life coupled with right teaching. (TLSB)

to burn incense. At the altar of incense in the Holy Place (Ex 30:1–10). 3) *to wear an ephod.* See note on v. 18. It would appear that the reference here is to the special ephod of the high priest (see Ex 28:4–13). The breastplate containing the Urim and Thummim was attached to the ephod of the high priest. The Urim and Thummim were a divinely ordained means of communication with God, placed in the custody of the high priest. (CSB)

2:29 *Why then do you scorn.* The Lord holds Eli the parent/high priest ultimately responsible for the actions of his sons; Eli's failure to restrain his sons (cf 3:13) showed that he honored them more than God. (TLSB)

2:30–32 God's judgment against Eli means an end to Eli's priestly line. Under Solomon, the Zadokite priests would take up the priesthood. Luth: "God praises and commends only those who turn all praise away from themselves and direct it to Him" (*WLS* § 3427). Chem: "Having been deserted by God, they offended even more and did not hear the voice of their father, and thus in piling up sins they also heaped up for themselves the wrath of God, until finally they had filled the measure to the full" (*LTh* 1:198). (TLSB)

2:30 *Far be it from me!* This is not to say that the promise of the priesthood to Aaron's house has been annulled, but rather that Eli and his house are to be excluded from participation in this privilege because of their sin. (CSB)

who honor me I will honor. See v. 29. Spiritual privileges bring responsibilities and obligations; they are not to be treated as irrevocable rights (see 2Sa 22:26–27). (CSB)

2:31 *strength ... strength.* Lit. "arm ... arm," symbolic of strength. Eli's "arm" and that of his priestly family will be cut off (contrast David, 2Sa 22:35). (CSB)

not be an old man in your family line. A prediction of the decimation of Eli's priestly family in the death of his sons (4:11), in the massacre of his descendants by Saul at Nob (22:18–19) and in the removal of Abiathar from his priestly office (1Ki 2:26–27). (CSB)

2:32 *in distress you will look with envious eye.* Including the capture of the ark by the Philistines (4:1–10), the destruction of Shiloh (Jer 7:14) and the relocation of the tabernacle to Nob. (CSB)

2:33 A reference apparently to Abiathar, who was expelled from office by Solomon (see 1Ki 2:26–27) after an unsuccessful attempt to make Adonijah king as the successor to David. (CSB)

2:34 *a sign to you.* The death of Hophni and Phinehas (4:11) will confirm the longer-term predictions. Such confirmation of a prophetic word was not uncommon (see 10:7–9; 1Ki 13:3; Jer 28:15–17; Lk 1:18–20). (CSB)

The deaths of Eli's sons on the same day would see the beginning of God putting into effect His judgment on Eli's house. God was about to deliver His people as He had repeatedly done before. (TLSB)

2:35 *I will raise up for myself a faithful priest.* Initially fulfilled in the person of Zadok, who served as a priest during the time of David (see 2Sa 8:17; 15:24, 35; 20:25) and who eventually replaced Abiathar as high priest in the time of Solomon (see 1Ki 2:35; 1Ch 29:22). (CSB)

Most immediately, Samuel. Later, Zadok was the faithful priest under the reign of Solomon (1Ki 2:26–35). It is a promise that is fulfilled perfectly in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus (Heb 7:26–28). Hipp: “All the kings and priests were styled Christs, because they were anointed with the holy oil, which Moses of old prepared. These, then, bore the name of the Lord in their persons, showing aforetime the type, and presenting the image until the perfect King and Priest appeared from heaven, who alone did the will of the Father” (ANF 5:180). (TLSB)

His household or lineage. (TLSB)

I will build him a sure house. Lit. “build for him a faithful house”; the faithful priest will be given a “faithful” (i.e., enduring) priestly family. See the similar word spoken concerning David (25:28, “lasting dynasty”; see also 2Sa 7:16; 1Ki 11:38). The line of Zadok was continued by his son Azariah (see 1Ki 4:1) and was still on the scene at the time of the return from the exile (see 1Ch 6:14–15; Ezr 3:2). It continued in intertestamental times until Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.) sold the priesthood to Menelaus (in the Apocrypha see 2 Maccabees 4:23–50), who was not of the priestly line. (CSB)

His household or lineage. (TLSB)

my anointed forever. David and his successors. (CSB)

God's chosen leader, the king. (TLSB)

The prophecy is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. (TLSB)

2:36 A priest who lost his job lost his inheritance, or portion, in Israel. (TLSB)

2:27–36 Eli receives God's condemnation of his priestly service, a judgment that has negative consequences for Eli's whole house. God vows that He will raise up a faithful priest to serve Him according to His will. This word warns us that God will hold us responsible for those in our care. It also assures us that God will always provide a means of saving us from our sins through the ministry of the anointed Son of God, Jesus Christ. • Lord God, give us the humility to take responsibility for people in our care, and save us from turning a blind eye to evil. Amen. (TLSB)